

## China's New Policy of Ethnic Unification



### Introduction

The National People's Congress of China passed the Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress on March 12, 2026. This legislation makes President Xi Jinping's Second-Generation Ethnic Policies official. It marks a clear change from the old model of regional ethnic autonomy to a centralized, assimilationist framework. This law is an essential case study for civil service aspirants because it alters the social fabric of half of China's landmass and carries significant strategic implications for India.

### The Process – From Independence to Intermingling

China previously employed a First-Generation policy that granted 55 minority groups, such as Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Mongols, limited freedom through the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy. However, the 2026 law transforms this into a process called Intermingling.

### The Goal

The objective is to create a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation, known as Zhonghua Minzu.

### The Methodology

Instead of preserving distinct ethnic identities, the goal is to create mutually embedded community environments where the Han majority and minorities live, study, and work together in a manner that prioritizes Han culture.

### Important Features of the 2026 Law

The law contains 65 Articles that mobilize the state and society, including schools, media, and private businesses, to enforce national unity.

1. **Mandarin-First Education** – Article 15 mandates that Standard Chinese (Putonghua) must be the primary language of instruction. In public places, scripts from minority groups must be less prominent than Chinese characters.
2. **Social Engineering** – The law encourages regional migration and inter-district employment. It specifically prohibits interfering with inter-ethnic marriages for ethnic or religious reasons.
3. **Securitization** – It connects ethnic issues directly to National Security. Actions that are perceived to hurt ethnic unity are categorized as separatism or extremism.
4. **Extraterritorial Scope** – The law allows China to pursue individuals or groups outside its borders if they are deemed to be harming ethnic unity.

### Sinicization – How It Works and What It Means

Sinicization is the process of requiring non-Han groups to follow the cultural, linguistic, and political rules of the Han majority and the Communist Party of China.

### The Steps

1. **Religious Sinicization** – Requiring religious groups to fit into a socialist society. This includes removing Islamic domes or Tibetan Buddhist symbols and replacing them with Han-style architecture.
2. **Family Intervention** – Prohibiting parents from teaching children ideas categorized as harmful, such as minority-focused or religious views.
3. **Mass Surveillance** – Using high-tech biometric and algorithmic tools to monitor ethnic harmony in border regions like Tibet and Xinjiang.

### The Implications

1. **Cultural Erosion** – Critics argue this causes minority cultures to hollow out and eventually lose their native languages.
2. **Human Rights Concerns** – International organizations often view these policies as a cover for forced labor, mass detention, and cultural indoctrination.
3. **Political Division** – While the state claims these policies lead to common prosperity, they can generate resentment among groups who feel their identity is under attack.

### Importance for India and Strategic Conclusions

India views China's new ethnic policy as a concern for both regional stability and border security.

1. **Border Stability** – Moving Han populations into the Tibet Autonomous Region near the Line of Actual Control changes the human landscape of the border. This could make Chinese control over disputed areas more permanent.
2. **Transnational Repression** – The law's extraterritorial reach could be used to target Tibetan and Uyghur populations living in India, causing diplomatic and security friction.
3. **The Five Fingers Strategy** – The push for a unified identity supports China's historical claims to areas it refers to as South Tibet, known in India as Arunachal Pradesh.
4. **Ideological Challenge** – India's model of Unity in Diversity as a pluralistic democracy stands in direct contrast to China's model of Unity through Assimilation.

### Conclusion

The Ethnic Unity and Progress Promotion Law 2026 is a major step in the CCP's plan for a monocultural state. By prioritizing Han norms through a security lens, China seeks to eliminate the perceived risks of diversity. This suggests India will face a more aggressive and ideologically rigid neighbor. To protect its democratic pluralism, India may require a stronger Vibrant Villages program and increased border monitoring.

### Mains Model Question

China's new Ethnic Unity law shows a change from constitutional autonomy to forced cultural assimilation. Critically look at how it affects India's national security and border management plans.

### Answer Guidelines

#### 1. Introduction

Mention the passing of the law in March 2026 and its goal of building a strong community for the Chinese nation.

#### 2. Body

##### Paragraph 1 (The Change)

Compare the 1949 Autonomy model to the 2026 Assimilation model. Discuss Mandarin-first policies and the use of the National Security lens.

##### Paragraph 2 (Impact on India)

Address border engineering and Han migration near the Line of Actual Control. Discuss the diaspora risk for refugees in India and the connection to territorial claims in Arunachal Pradesh.

##### Paragraph 1 (Ideological Impact)

Contrast China's assimilation with India's pluralism as a form of soft power.

#### 3. Conclusion

Suggest improvements for border infrastructure and the importance of maintaining a strong democratic narrative.