



TIBET

An Overview of China's Oppression and Sino-Tibet Conflict

HANDBOOK FOR
INTERNATIONAL TIBET YOUTH FORUM
DHARAMSHALA, 3-5 JULY 2025



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Department of Information and International Relations
Central Tibetan Administration



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WHY TIBET MATTERS

1. The Geo-Political Significance of Tibet

Tibet is located in the heart of Central Asia, at an average altitude of over 4,000 metres, bordered by China to the east; India, Nepal, and Bhutan to the south; Burma to the southeast; and East Turkestan to the north. Tibet has historically been a buffer state, enjoying a strong and harmonious relationship with all its neighbours until its occupation by the PRC. With an area of 2.5 million square kms, Tibet is almost a quarter of the PRC's territory; the PRC has reduced much of Tibet into the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Qinghai Province, and the rest is incorporated into the neighbouring Chinese provinces of Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan.

Until the PRC's military occupation, Tibet had always remained an independent state, a position supported by a growing consensus in academia, including amongst Chinese and Western scholars. In this context, acting at the behest of the PRC in distorting the historical status of Tibet by claiming "Tibet as an inseparable part of China since ancient times" contravenes international law and destroys the very basis for according leverage to the Middle-Way Policy. The decisions about Tibet and the future of Tibetans must be made only by the Tibetans.

Considering the geo-political impact of Tibet in the increasingly interdependent world, the resolution of the Sino-Tibet conflict will undoubtedly promote better understanding and relations between our neighbours for a more secure region and a peaceful world.

2. The Spiritual and Cultural Significance of Tibet

The world is suffering the consequences of ignoring the bitter lessons learned from the last century's wars and destruction.

Buddha's message of non-violence and conflict resolution through dialogue is needed now more than ever, and the preservation of the Tibetan Buddhist culture has the potential to promote greater peace in the world.

Today, Tibetan Buddhism's influence permeates into its neighbouring nations of India, China, Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, Russia, and beyond. Particularly with regard to India, the logic rooted in the ancient wisdom of the Nalanda tradition of Buddhism has deeply influenced Tibet, and it has been preserved in its pristine form in the Tibetan language. The cultural connection between Tibet and India is ancient and abiding. We look upon India as Guru and ourselves as devoted Chela. It is estimated that China alone has at least 250 million Buddhists, and many of them take a keen interest in Tibetan Buddhism, a practice that can support millions in fulfilling their spiritual void.

3. The Environmental Significance of Tibet

From the ecological perspective, Tibet - the roof of the world, is one of the most strategically located regions in the world. And it is also an environmentally sensitive region to climate change. Tibet is also known as the 'Water Tower' of Asia, and its rivers flow into India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and China, directly or indirectly serving an estimated 2 billion people. Referred to as the world's 'Third Pole' by environmentalists, Tibet houses the largest reservoir of glaciers and permafrost outside of the Arctic and the Antarctic circles. Tibet is also home to distinctive flora and fauna, and its unique biodiversity must be preserved not only for the sake of Tibet's ecology but for the future of the earth. The Tibetans have traditionally lived in harmony with nature for thousands of years, guided by Buddhist beliefs in the interdependence of both living and non-living elements of the earth.

During the last seven decades of the PRC's occupation, its destructive and exploitative policies have caused mineral exploitation, deforestation, destruction of wildlife, forced resettlement of nomads, and large-scale infrastructure development leading to desertification of Tibetan grasslands, rising temperature, landslides, and floods.

Proper stewardship of Tibet's environment is central to climate change challenges, making it important not only for the Tibetans but for China and the world at large. However, Tibet is warming at twice the global rate, resulting in melting glaciers, and causing flood, food and water security risks in the downstream riparian states.

4. China's Policy of Cultural Genocide in Tibet

To have a vision for Tibet's future, it is critical to understand the harsh oppression and suffering faced by Tibetans inside Tibet and work towards fulfilling their aspirations. Therefore, it is one of our prime responsibilities to create awareness on the international platform based on the real situation inside Tibet.

a. Cultural Genocide

The PRC has made multiple commitments to international human rights conventions and what is enshrined in its own Constitution. Violating these commitments, the PRC is imposing a policy of one nation, one culture, one religion, and one language aimed at destroying the Tibetan culture. It threatens the very survival of our unique cultural identity. Instead of learning lessons from the repression suffered by the Natives and Aborigines under the colonial regimes in different parts of the world, the PRC is intentionally repeating such anachronistic and misguided policies in Tibet. 157 Tibetans are known to have set themselves on fire out of desperation under the repressive policies of the Chinese government in the last more than ten years.

b. Intensive Surveillance

In the name of national security and stability, the PRC is making huge investments in internal security and surveillance apparatus. Tibetans are subjected to multiple layers of surveillance on a regular basis, including the use of artificial intelligence-enabled surveillance: electronic identification, facial recognition, geo-location, DNA profiling, and iris scanning. This technological surveillance is augmented by human surveillance through the grid management system. Most recently, the so-called Regulations on Network and Information Security have been enforced in Tibet, strictly monitoring the movement of Tibetans and restricting their freedom of expression and freedom of thought. Increasingly, any political actions of an individual Tibetan have severe consequences for the safety of relatives and friends inside Tibet. There are also many cases of relatives abroad facing intimidation in the form of transnational repression.

c. Information Control

In China, any information that is deemed to “threaten national security and stability of China” is considered a “threat to the nation”. Tibetans are frequently labelled “separatist” and face consequences ranging from arbitrary arrests, disappearances, incarcerations, and deaths. The flow of information is strictly controlled and monitored with severe consequences for those who share information with the outside world or redistribute information inside Tibet. A new regulation has been enforced to criminalise and severely punish those creating social media groups with alleged links to “separatist forces” and joining such groups. The Chinese government has imposed heavy restrictions on Tibetans inside Tibet from travelling abroad. Access to Tibet remains elusive for Tibetans abroad and foreigners alike.

d. Colonial-Style Boarding Schools

Despite being a signatory to the UN Convention on the

Rights of the Child, nearly a million Tibetan children have reportedly been forced into colonial-style boarding schools. These children are indoctrinated with the Chinese language, ideology, and loyalty to the party by separating them from their families and depriving them of their right to grow in their own culture and learn their own language. Besides that, Tibetan language classes conducted voluntarily during the holidays are banned. Sinicisation of the Tibetan children will not only have a detrimental impact on the Tibetans but may harm the traditional affinity between the Tibetans and the neighbouring countries, including India.

e. Politicisation of Religion and Violation of Freedom of Belief

The PRC's design to control Tibet and Sinicise Tibetan Buddhism directly infringes on the fundamental religious freedom of the Tibetan people. These include the persecution of influential religious leaders, restriction on freedom of movement, and denunciation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, including banning His Holiness' portraits, controlling the curriculum and monasteries, and politicising the recognition of reincarnate lamas. The PRC issued Order No. 5 of 2007 that falsely asserts the right of the government's authority over the recognition of reincarnate lamas e. Politicisation of Religion and Violation of Freedom of Belief 10 in violation of the traditional Tibetan Buddhist practice. Even today, the PRC government conducts workshops, discussion forums, meetings, policy announcements, and documentary film screenings and uses every means to promote a false narrative on issues concerning the evolution, development, and reality of Tibetan Buddhism and reincarnation.

Sadly, the Eleventh Panchen Lama, recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the tender age of six, was abducted in 1995, and his whereabouts and well-being remain unknown. Similarly, hundreds of Tibetan political prisoners continue to suffer incarceration and imprisonment.

5. The Way Forward: The Middle-Way Policy

Even in the face of existential attacks, including the suppression of our people and the destruction of our distinct identity, we remain committed to resolving the long-standing Sino-Tibet conflict through non-violence and negotiation. The term Middle-Way Policy is derived from a Buddhist concept that seeks to avoid extreme polarities. The Middle-Way Policy was formulated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, supported by the majority of the general Tibetan public, and endorsed unanimously by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

The Middle-Way Policy seeks the right for Tibetans to self-govern, preserve and promote our language, maintain intergenerational transmission of identity and culture, practise our religion free from interference, and have the freedom to live our way of life in harmony with nature. It is a policy based on pragmatism and mutual benefit, balancing the sovereignty concerns of China while recognising the one-ness of Tibetan identity across all Tibetan regions. Moreover, Tibet can benefit from PRC's economic development while China can spiritually benefit from the Tibetans, which will help to promote ethnic harmony and secure regional stability.



THE HISTORICAL STATUS OF TIBET*

When the troops of the People's Liberation Army of China invaded from 1949 to 1951, Tibet was an independent state. The Chinese military takeover of Tibet constituted an aggression against a sovereign state. The continued occupation of Tibet by China, with the help of several hundred thousand troops, violates international law and the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people.

China's alleged claim to Tibet is based on historical relationships, primarily between the Mongol and Manchu rulers of China with the Dalai Lamas of Tibet and other Tibetan lamas. The primary events the Chinese Communist government rely on occurred centuries ago during the height of Mongol imperial expansion in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The Mongol emperors ruled over most of Eurasia, including China. The PRC also focuses on the eighteenth century, when the Manchu rulers, whose empire also included China.

One of the major claims by the PRC is that "Tibet has been part of China since antiquity." This has been one of the many invented narratives since the invasion of Tibet, when the PRC declared that, "the Tibetan people shall return to the big family of Motherland—the People's Republic of China."¹ Scholars who have analyzed authoritative dynastic geographies, in particular those of the Yuan, Ming, and Qing, as Prof. Hon-Shiang Lau has recently done,² have concluded that Tibet was not historically part of China and that it was not regarded as such by the rulers of those times.³

Michael Van Walt Van Praag, an authority on international law and also the author of a seminal book, *The Status of Tibet*,

* Adapted from "Tibet - 70 Years of Occupation and Oppression", DIIR publication

also concludes that Tibet was historically never a part of China, he explains:

The PRC's narrative used to prove historical Chinese 'ownership of or sovereignty over Tibet has several fundamental flaws. Firstly, it conflates 'China' with the dominant empires of Asia and invokes and interprets the relationship that those empires developed with Tibet as evidence of Chinese or China's historical sovereignty over Tibet. The PRC does this by deploying the traditional Chinese narrative of the seamless succession of dynasties, all labeled as "Chinese," thereby obscuring the nature of the Mongol and Manchu empires, both of which were not Chinese. By concealing that China was absorbed, by conquest, into these Inner Asian empires and suggesting instead that those empires' foreign rulers were absorbed into China, the PRC appropriates those empires to claim for itself rights to territories outside China.⁴

These scholars' findings are not new. Already in 1960, the International Commission of Jurists' Legal Enquiry Committee on Tibet reported in its study on Tibet's legal status:

Tibet demonstrated from 1913 to 1950 the conditions of statehood as generally accepted under international law. In 1950 there was a people and a territory, and a government that functioned in that territory, conducting its domestic affairs free from any outside authority. From 1913-1950 foreign relations in Tibet were conducted exclusively by the Government of Tibet, and countries with whom Tibet had foreign relations are shown by official documents to have treated Tibet in practice as an independent State.⁵

Early History

According to Tibetan historical sources, the first king of Tibet ruled from 127 BC, but it was only in the seventh century that Tibet emerged as a unified state under Emperor Songtsen Gampo (r. 617-649). During his rule, Tibet witnessed an era of political and military supremacy that lasted for three

centuries. The King of Nepal and the Emperor of China offered their daughters in marriage to the Tibetan Emperor and these marriages were of particular significance because they played vital roles in the spread of Buddhism in Tibet. The PRC's propaganda always refers to the political implications of Songtsen Gampo's union with the Tang imperial princess Wen Cheng. However, this alliance was a result of Tibet's supremacy in Inner Asia at the time.

Tibetan Emperor Trisong Detsen (r. 755-797) expanded the Tibetan empire by conquering parts of China. In 763, Tibet invaded and occupied Tang China's capital, Chang'an (modern-day Xian), and the Tang Empire had to pay an annual tribute to Tibet. In 783, a treaty was concluded that laid down the borders between Tibet and China; a pillar inscription at the foot of the Potala Palace in Lhasa bears witness to some of these conquests.

In 823, a new peace treaty was concluded between Tibet and Tang China, demarcating the borders between the two countries, as inscribed on a pillar at the Jokhang in Lhasa. This important treaty illustrates the nature of relations between these two great powers of Asia at the time. The text was inscribed in both Tibetan and Chinese on three stone pillars: one erected in Gungu Meru to demarcate the borders between the two countries, the second at the Jokhang in Lhasa where it still stands, and the third in the Tang imperial capital of Chang'an. The treaty reads:

Tibet and China shall abide by the frontiers of which they are now in occupation. All to the east is the country of great China; and all to the west is, without question, the country of great Tibet. Henceforth, neither side shall there be waging war for seizing territory.⁶

The PRC interprets these events to show that "the Tibetans and Chinese had, through marriage between royal families

and meetings leading to alliances, cemented political and kinship ties of unity and political friendship, and formed closer economic and cultural relations, laying a solid foundation for the ultimate founding of a unified nation.”⁷ In fact, both the Chinese and Tibetan historical records contradict such an interpretation and refer instead to separate powerful empires. The late Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, who headed the Tibetan delegation to Beijing in 1951 to negotiate the terms of the 17-Point Agreement, and held senior positions in the PRC ever since, stated in a speech to the so-called TAR’s Congress, where he said:

Some historians claim that Tibet had been a part of China since antiquity, some others claim since the time of Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo through his marriage to the Chinese princess. I do not agree with both of these views. When you talk about antiquity, there is no timeline or if it is from the time of Songtsen Gampo’s marriage, we all know that the first queen of Songtsen Gampo was Nepal’s princess in which case Tibet should be part of Nepal. How can we explain this?⁸

In the mid-ninth century, the Tibetan Empire fragmented. Tibet focused attention on India and Nepal, and these regions’ strong religious and cultural influences brought about a major spiritual and intellectual renaissance in Tibet.

Relations with the Mongol Empire (1240-1350)

The Mongol ruler Genghis Khan and his successors conquered vast territories in Asia and Europe, creating the largest land empire the world had ever known which stretched from the Pacific to eastern Europe and the Middle East. In 1207, the Tangut Empire fell to the advancing Mongols, and in 1271, the Mongols established the Mongol Yuan Dynasty to rule the Chinese part of the empire. By 1279, the Chinese Sung Dynasty in southern China fell before the advancing Mongol armies and the Mongols completed their conquest of China. Today, the PRC claims the Mongol Dynasty to be its dynasty,

and by doing so, claims Mongol conquests in East Asia and beyond.

Prince Goden, the grandson of Genghis Khan, dispatched an expedition to Tibet in 1240 and invited one of Tibet's leading religious hierarchs, Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen (1182-1251) to his court, thus establishing an enduring Tibet-Mongol relationship. Here began the unique priest-patron relationship (*chos-yon*). Kublai Khan, who inherited Goden Khan's authority, embraced Tibetan Buddhism and Drogon Choegyal Phagpa, a nephew of Sakya Pandita became his spiritual mentor. When Kublai Khan became the Great Khan of the Mongol Empire in 1260, Phagpa became the empire's highest spiritual authority and the Sakya hierarchs ruled Tibet under his overlordship.

These early *chos-yon* relationships were followed by many similar relationships between Mongol princes and Tibetan noble families and Tibetan lamas. It also formed the basis for later relations between Manchu emperors and successive Dalai Lamas. The *choyon* relationship itself was a personal one arising from the religious devotion of the patron to the priest and continued to exist even when the political status of the patron changed. An essential element of the *cho-yon* relationship was the protection that the patron provided his lama in return for his religious teachings, blessings, and guidance.

At the time when Buddhism became the state religion in the eastern part of the Mongol Empire and the Sakya Lama (Phagpa) as its highest spiritual authority, the Tibet-Mongol relationship can be best described in terms of mutual interdependence. This concept defined the dual political and religious supremacy of the worldly emperor and the spiritual leader based on equality and interdependence. While the spiritual leader depended on the emperor for protection and

support in ruling Tibet, the emperor depended on the lama to provide legitimacy for his rule of the Mongol Empire.

It is undeniable that Mongol Great Khans had overlordship over Tibet but none of them administered Tibet directly nor did they impose taxes on Tibetans. The official Mongol dynastic history, Yuan Shi, which was compiled during the Ming Dynasty, confirms this.

Tibet freed itself of nominal Mongol domination in 1350 when the Tibetan ruler, Changchub Gyaltsen (r. 1350-1364) replaced the Sakya lamas as the most powerful ruler of Tibet. Changchub Gyaltsen did away with Mongol influence in the Tibetan administrative system and introduced a new and distinctly Tibetan one. He also enacted a 15-Article Code (Trimyig Shelchey Chonga) for the administration of justice in the kingdom. The Chinese regained their independence from Mongol rule and established the Ming Dynasty while the Mongol empire continued to rule much of Central Asia for some three hundred years.

The relationship between Mongol Khans and Tibetan lamas predated the Mongol conquest of China. Similarly, Tibet broke away from the Mongol emperors before China regained its independence from them. The Chinese Ming emperors inherited no authority over or relationship with Tibetans from the Mongols.

Relations with the Ming Emperors (1368-1644)

Contacts between Tibet and Ming China were sporadic and largely limited to visits to China by individual lamas of various monasteries and the granting of honorific imperial titles or gifts to them by the Chinese Emperor. These visits are recorded in Tibetan histories from the fifteenth to seventeenth century but there is no evidence whatsoever of political subordination of Tibet during this period. As the late Elliot Sperling, a noted

Tibetologist and a leading authority on this period of Tibetan history writes:

An examination of the events surrounding the presentation of these titles shows clearly that the recipients held power and/or influence in Tibet before their being granted. As such, the titles did not bestow power but rather acknowledge it, and their granting must be seen as something akin to the not uncommon presentation of honors, titles, or awards by one country to nationals of another.⁹

From 1350 onwards, Tibet was ruled by the princes of Phagmodru and then, from about 1481, by the Rinpungpas. In 1406, the ruling Phagmodru prince, Dakpa Gyaltsen turned down an imperial invitation to visit Ming China, an indication of the independent authority of Tibetan rulers at the time. From about 1565 until the rise to power of the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1642, the kings of Tsang ruled Tibet. There are indications of sporadic diplomatic relations between some of these rulers and the Ming emperors, but the latter exercised neither authority nor influence over them.

In 1644, Ming China was conquered by the expanding Manchu Empire. The Manchu Empire was an Inner Asian empire that at its peak ruled over large parts of Inner Asia as well as the former Ming realm. Its second emperor, Hong Taiji named it the Qing Great State.

Relations with the Manchus (1639-1911)

In 1642, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama became the supreme political and religious ruler of unified Tibet. From then on, Tibetans regarded him as their Gongsar Chenpo, the Supreme Sovereign, and his prestige was recognized far beyond Tibet's borders. The Fifth Dalai Lama not only maintained a close relationship with the Mongols but also developed important ties with the Manchu rulers.

In 1639, even before the Dalai Lama had acquired supreme political power and also before the Manchu conquest of China, Manchu Emperor Hong Taiji invited the Dalai Lama to his capital, Mukden (present-day Shenyang). Unable to accept the invitation personally, the Dalai Lama sent his envoy who was treated with great respect by the emperor. It was then that a cho-yon relationship between the Dalai Lamas and Manchu emperors was strengthened.

As was true of the Tibetan relationship with the Mongol emperors, the links developed between Tibetans and the Manchu emperors did not involve China. As Owen Lattimore points out about the Qing Dynasty, "what existed was a Manchu Empire, of which China formed only one part."¹⁰ Tibet's relations, throughout this period, were with the Manchu imperial court and not with China.

Having conquered China and annexed it to the Manchu Empire, the third emperor, Shunzi, invited the Fifth Dalai Lama for a state visit to the imperial capital in 1653. In an unprecedented sign of respect, the Manchu emperor intended to make a four-day journey outside his capital (present-day Beijing) to receive the Tibetan sovereign and the foremost Buddhist leader of Inner Asia but his Chinese advisors persuaded him otherwise. Commenting on the Dalai Lama's visit, W.W. Rockhill, an American scholar and diplomat in Beijing later, wrote:

[The Dalai Lama] had been treated with all the ceremony which could have been accorded to any independent sovereign, and nothing can be found in Chinese works to indicate that he was looked upon in any other light; at this period of China's relations with Tibet, the temporal power of the Lama, backed by the arms of Gusri Khan and the devotion of all Mongolia, was not a thing for the Emperor of China to question.¹¹

On this occasion, the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Manchu emperor bestowed unprecedented complimentary titles upon each other, and the cho-yon relationship was reaffirmed. Throughout the Qing imperial era, relations between Tibet and the Manchu Emperors remained formally and firmly grounded in the cho-yon relationship. The Manchu Emperor readily responded to appeals for help to drive out invading Dzungar Mongols and escorted the newly discovered 7th Dalai Lama to the Tibetan capital in 1720.

Manchu forces entered Tibet on three more occasions in the eighteenth century: twice to restore order after unrest (1728 and 1751), and once to protect Tibet against invading Gorkha forces in 1792. Each time the Manchus came at the request of the Tibetan rulers, and each time the cho-yon relationship was invoked. Though the Manchus did succeed in establishing a degree of influence in Tibet during those periods of crisis, their influence declined rapidly afterward, rendering them unable to play any role when Tibet fought against Dogra invaders of Jammu and Kashmir from 1841-1842, Gorkhas of Nepal from 1855-1856, and British India in 1903-1904. By the mid-nineteenth century, the Manchu emperor's role and that of his Amban were only nominal.

Concerning the role of ambans, the CCP claims that the appointment of ambans to Tibet demonstrates Qing sovereignty over it. The ambans were imperial representatives, not viceroys or administrators, appointed to look after Manchu interests and to protect the Dalai Lama on behalf of the emperor. At times their role resembled that of an ambassador. The amban's role was best described by Amban Yu Tai, who reportedly explained it thus, to Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of the British Raj in 1903:

He was only a guest in Lhasa-not a master-and he could not put aside the real masters, and as such he had no force to speak of.¹²

The Lazarist missionaries Huc and Gabet, who were in Lhasa in the mid-nineteenth century, similarly described the position of the Ambans as follows:

The Government of Tibet resembles that of the Pope and the position occupied by the Chinese Ambassadors was the same as that of the Austrian Ambassador at Rome.¹³

The ninth Panchen Lama, Thubten Choekyi Nyima, explained to Captain O'Connor of the British Raj:

Where Chinese [sic] policy was in accordance with their views, the Tibetans were ready to accept the amban's advice; but...if this advice ran counter in any respect to their national prejudices, the Chinese [sic] Emperor himself would be powerless to influence them.¹⁴

The references to “Chinese Emperor” or “Chinese Ambassadors,” especially prevalent among Europeans and Americans, are a misnomer since neither the emperors nor the ambans were Chinese. The Manchu Emperors might have been emperors of China but their relations with Tibet were distinct, they were constructed outside the Sino-centric system and were governed instead by the Priest-Patron relationship a construct of the Tibetan Buddhist legal order. Consequently, the Manchu emperors were careful to not appoint Chinese to the post of ambans in Tibet, but instead senior Manchu or Mongol officials, a fact which stressed that such appointments were an extension of the protector's role in the cho-yon relationship, a relationship from which the Chinese were excluded.

The unprecedented invasion of Tibet by Manchu imperial troops in 1908 was a turning point in relations between Tibet and the Manchu Empire. Previous Manchu military

interventions had been undertaken to assist the Dalai Lamas and the Tibetan government at their request. But this time, anxiety over British influence in Tibet led the Manchu ruler to attempt to establish his authority in Tibet by force. As a result, the Dalai Lama severed relations with the Manchu court in 1909 and fled to neighboring India. When the Manchu ruler tried to “depose” the Dalai Lama, the latter declared the termination of the cho-yon relationship.

However, the occupation of Tibet by the Manchus was short-lived. The Chinese revolution of 1911 overthrew the Manchu empire and imperial troops and officials were expelled from Tibet and sent to China. The 13th Dalai Lama returned to Tibet and issued a proclamation reaffirming the independence of Tibet on February 13, 1913.

Relations with Republic of China (1911-1949)

The Republic of China’s position on Tibet was contradictory. On one hand, the Nationalist Government unilaterally announced in its provisional constitution and in communications to other countries that Tibet was a province of the Republic of China (one of the “five races” of the Republic, ROC). On the other hand, in its official communications with the Dalai Lama and the Government of Tibet, it was clearly understood that Tibet was not a part of the Republic of China. China’s President repeatedly sent letters and envoys to the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government asking that Tibet “join” the Republic of China. Similar messages were sent by China to Mongolia and Nepal. Tibet consistently refused to join the new Chinese Republic.

In response to the first letter of Chinese President Yuan Shikai, the 13th Dalai Lama rejected his invitation to join the Republic, explaining courteously but firmly that Tibetans did “not approve” of the Chinese Government due to past injustices. The 13th Dalai Lama stated:

The Republic has only just been proclaimed and the national foundations are far from strong. It behooves the President to exert his energies toward the maintenance of order. As for Tibet, the Tibetans are quite capable of preserving their existence intact and the President does not have to worry himself at this distance or to be discomposd.¹⁵

Tibet, for its part, wanted the return of some border territories from China that had been taken just before the collapse of the Manchu empire. The Dalai Lama later explained:

Under the priest-patron relationship that prevailed so far, Tibet has enjoyed wide independence. We wish to preserve this. We feel that there will be long-term stability if the territories we have lost to outsiders are returned to us.¹⁶

When Chinese envoys, such as General Huang Musung (1934) and Wu Zhongxin (1940), were sent to Tibet to persuade the Tibetans to join the ROC, they were told in no uncertain terms by the Tibetan Government that Tibet was and wished to remain independent. Huang Musung was the first Chinese official to be permitted to enter Tibet in an official capacity because he purportedly came to offer religious tribute and condolences for the deceased Dalai Lama who passed away in 1933, an act for which Tibetans could hardly refuse permission anyone. It should be noted that, contrary to the PRC's claims, neither the Chinese Government nor its "special envoy" (Huang Musung) had any role in the appointment of the regent, Reting Rinpoche, following the death of the 13th Dalai Lama. In fact, Huang Musung arrived in Lhasa in July 1934, more than five months after Reting Rinpoche had been appointed the regent of Tibet in January 10, 1934.

The PRC claims that Tibetan government officials were sent to participate in China's National Assembly sessions in 1931 and 1946 in Nanjing. This is false. In 1931, Khenpo Kunchok Jungne was appointed by the 13th Dalai Lama to set up

a temporary liaison office in Nanjing in order to maintain contact with the ROC government and not to participate in the Assembly. Likewise, in 1946, the Tibetan mission that was sent to congratulate Britain, the United States and China on the Allied victory in the Second World War, had no instruction or authority to attend the Chinese National Assembly.

Responding to the International Commission of Jurists' Legal Inquiry Committee on 29 August 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama said:

They [Tibetan delegates in Nanjing] had no official part in the Assembly. When the propaganda came to the knowledge of our government, they were instructed by telegram not to attend.

In 1940, the ROC government was allowed to open a mission in Lhasa, which operated on a similar footing to the British Mission. ROC's last head of mission in Lhasa, Shen Tsung-Lien, was clear on the status of Tibet. He wrote:

Since 1911 Lhasa [i.e. the Tibetan Government in Lhasa] has to all practical purposes enjoyed full independence.¹⁷

Relations with British India (1857-1947)

By the end of the nineteenth century, the British Raj developed a keen interest in establishing trade with Tibet. All the Himalayan regions were closely linked to Lhasa and since they had all gradually been tied to British Raj by means of treaties and other agreements, Tibet feared it would also lose its independence if it did not resist British efforts to gain access to Tibet.

In the mid-19th century, colonial India had a close and profitable tie with the Manchu Empire. During the negotiation, the Chinese representative persuaded the British to insert

provisions that assert Qing's "suzerainty" over Tibet. The resulting Sino-British Chefoo Convention of 1876 granted Britain the "right" to send a mission of exploration into Tibet.¹⁸ This mission failed to materialize as Tibetans within their rights refused to allow them. This clearly shows that Qing had no influence whatsoever in dealing with Tibet. The Tibetan government refused to have anything to do with the British and outrightly rejected provisions related to Tibet in Britain's treaties with Qing, including the Peking Convention of 24 July 1886, and the Calcutta Convention of 17 March 1890.

The 13th Dalai Lama steered Tibet on an independent course. This policy frustrated the British Raj which feared, more than anything, that Russian infiltration into Tibet would tip the balance of power in Central Asia. Unable to communicate effectively with Tibet, British Raj approached the Manchu court for assistance in forcing Tibet to cooperate. Without Tibet's participation or knowledge, this led to the conclusion of two treaties in 1890 and 1893 between British India and the Manchu Empire that included provisions regarding Tibet. The Tibetan government rejected these treaties as *ultra vires* and prevented their implementation. This precipitated the British invasion of Tibet in 1903. The Manchu emperor did not come to the assistance of Tibet. Within a year, British troops left Tibet after concluding the Lhasa Convention, a bilateral treaty with the Tibetan government.

The provisions of the Lhasa Convention necessarily pre-supposed the full sovereignty of Tibet and its capacity to conclude treaties. The Lhasa Convention did not acknowledge the existence of any special relationship between the Manchu empire and Tibet. The very act of concluding this Convention constituted Britain's recognition of Tibet as a state competent to conclude treaties on its own behalf without needing to consult any external power.

This worried the Manchu court, which feared future British incursions through Tibet. Britain convinced Manchu leaders to sign the Adhesion Agreement in 1906, once again, without the participation or knowledge of Tibetan authorities. This agreement, without either the knowledge or participation of Tibet recognized the existence of British sphere of influence in Tibet and introduced a concept of Manchu “suzerainty” over Tibet.

Referring to the British concept of Qing suzerainty over Tibet, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of British India, explained:

[it was] a constitutional fiction—a political affectation which has only been maintained because of its convenience to both parties...As a matter of fact, the two Chinese [i.e. Manchu] Ambans at Lhasa are there not as Viceroys, but as Ambassadors.¹⁹

Tibet asserted its sovereignty by signing a series of treaties in the early 20th century. These are undisputed evidences for Tibet as an independent and sovereign nation. One such treaty was with the newly independent Mongolia. Tibet concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Alliance with Mongolia in January 1913. In this treaty, the two states recognized each other’s sovereignty and independence of each other’s government.²⁰

Another significant treaty was signed in 1914 in the aftermath of Shimla Conference. This treaty was signed between Tibet, British India and the Republic of China. A British delegate pointed out to the Chinese plenipotentiary ahead of the conference that “the status of Tibet was that of an independent nation recognizing no allegiance to China.”²¹ Tibet as a state conducted treaty agreement with other nations, these are indisputable evidences for Tibet as an independent country. Also, the Shimla Agreement superseded all previous treaties signed between Britain and Qing concerning Tibet. Which in essence, rejects the supposed Qing’s “suzerainty” over Tibet.

Indian recognition

When India became independent in 1947, it inherited Britain's treaty relations with Tibet and took over the British diplomatic mission in Lhasa. Its recognition of Tibet was clear from the official communication the Indian Government sent to the Tibetan Foreign Office soon after independence:

The Government of India would be glad to have an assurance that it is the intention of the Tibetan Government to continue relations on the existing basis until new arrangements are reached on matters that either party may wish to take up. This is the procedure adopted by all other countries with which India has inherited treaty relations from His Majesty's Government.²²

Tibet was invited along with other Asian countries for the first InterAsian Relations conference held on March 23, 1947 in India. At the conference, Tibet was represented as an independent nation. Tibetan national flag was hoisted and a flag emblem was put up formally attached before the Tibetan delegate on the dias. Member of the Tibetan delegation, Sampo Theiji, spoke at the conference on March 24, 1947. His speech at the conference makes it clear that he was attending as a member of a delegation representing a free nation in Asia. At the conference, he said:

Our Tibetan Government received an invitation to join in the Asian Relations Conference. We are a country which administers its subjects on the basis of religious aspirations and India being the motherland of Buddhism, we Buddhist and specially Tibet had friendly relations with India from ancient times. Therefore, our Government have sent us here to attend this great Conference to maintain our peaceful relations based on religion.

In a similar way we are very glad to meet representatives from all the Asian countries in this Conference and we wish to express our sincere gratitude to the great Indian leaders,

Mahatma [sic] Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, and to all the distinguished representatives who have gathered in this Conference. As for the future, all the Asian countries will feel as brothers towards each other, a feeling based on spiritual relationship, so that in this way we might hope that there will be everlasting peace and unity in Asia.²³

Invasion Disguised as “Peaceful Liberation”

The PRC seized Tibet by the force of arms by defeating the Tibetan army, after which the Chinese government imposed its terms on Tibet for what it euphemistically called the “Peaceful Liberation of Tibet.” China’s seizure of Tibet was not peaceful, nor was Tibet liberated. The reality was that the PRC committed aggression against its independent neighbour, violating the most fundamental norm of international law - the prohibition of the use of force against another state.

When Tibetans resisted the occupation of their country and communist policies forced on them. In what became the national uprising culminated in His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s flight to India in 1959. The Chinese brutally crushed the movement, and admitted to killing over 90,000 Tibetans in the Lhasa region alone. The full impact of China’s occupation of Tibet is hard to fathom: the death toll is well above a million Tibetans, the destruction of religious and cultural institutions and centres of learning is irreparable. The suffering inflicted on the whole Tibetan population was immeasurable.

The Real Objective of the Invasion

The Chinese government conceals its real objectives through use of euphemisms such as “Peaceful Liberation” to describe the invasion of Tibet in its propaganda. Tibet was viewed by China as a strategic backdoor,²⁴ which had to be invaded and secured at any cost. The British military incursion into Tibet of 1903 had first alerted Beijing of this potential danger.

In fact, it was a strategic decision taken by Mao Zedong in December 1949.²⁵ Because the month of December 1949 and the following years had been strategically significant for Communist China in many ways.

Before Mao's departure to the Soviet Union in 1949, People's Liberation Army(PLA) gained major military victories against the Nationalist forces in the Bobai and Guangxi campaigns. These two victories accelerated the communists' control over the whole of China. By the end of 1949, virtually all of China came under Communist Party's control.²⁶ The PRC was starting to obtain international recognition. Mao was also gaining the confidence of Stalin. Under these favourable conditions Mao sent a telegram on January 10, 1950, in which he expressed his full agreement with Liu Bocheng and Deng Xiaoping's plan to dispatch troops into Tibet. "Britain, India, and Pakistan have all recognized us, which is favourable to [our] dispatching troops into Xizang[Tibet]," he wrote. He then added: According to Comrade Peng Dehuai, the four months needed for dispatching troops to Xizang[Tibet] will start in mid-May.²⁷

His telegram clearly depicted that the Communist China was waiting for the right time to strike and invade Tibet. Even despite making the announcement from the radio broadcasts, it took them almost a year after the first announcement of "liberation" to dispatch their troops to Tibet. Hence, it is no surprise that on October 7, 1950, while the world's attention was focused on the Korean War, 40,000 PLA troops invaded Tibet.²⁸

Forging False Narrative for PRC's Invasion

The principle argument presented by the PRC for the need to liberate Tibet was the presence of imperialist forces in Tibet. But in reality, there were no foreign forces at all in Tibet.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama wrote, “Far from receiving military aid, we had only six Europeans in Tibet, so far as I am aware. Three of them, one missionary and two radio operators, were British. The other three were two Austrians and one White Russian, all of whom had been refugees from British internment camps in India during the war. None of them had anything to do with military matters.”²⁹

China needed around 300,000 forces³⁰ consisting of PLA combat troops, logistical units, militia and civilian laborers and including over 30 Russian-made transport planes³¹ for “liberating Tibet” from a handful of foreigners in Tibet. The absurdity of this claim is evident from this fact.

PRC’s Invasion of Tibet and the Violation of International Law

China’s invasion of Tibet is in violation of international law reflected in article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter, which expressly forbids, “the threat or use of force against territorial integrity or political independence of any state.”³²

The international law in force at the time of Tibet’s invasion prohibited the acquisition of territory by means of force and the threat of force against a state, and excludes the possibility that the PRC acquired sovereignty over Tibet as a result of its defeat of the Tibetan army, capture of Chamdo, occupation of Lhasa and eventually other strategic areas. Whatever control the PRC achieved over Tibet at the time was the result of force and the threat to use further armed force.³³ There is no legal justification for China’s breach of Tibet’s territorial integrity. Rather, China is guilty of invasion and colonization of Tibet which is in violation of international law.³⁴ In short, the Chinese invasion of Tibet violates international law and amounts to the crime of aggression and crimes against humanity.³⁵

Invasion of Tibet to Further China's Strategic Plan

For China, Tibet was the strategic back-door, and in the words of Tibetologist, Professor Dawa Norbu, "China began to perceive Tibet as 'the back-door' to China, as 'the lips of the mouth.'" If the backdoor was opened and occupied by a foreign power, China could not feel safe and secure.³⁶ China's intention was clear from the beginning as revealed by its action by invading Tibet soon after CCP came to power in China. Almost immediately after imposing its so-called 17-Point Agreement on Tibet in 1951, China began constructing road networks that would link Tibet with China for the first time in history. The construction of East Turkistan (Ch: Xinjiang)-Tibet highway which was completed in 1957 passes through Aksai Chin. This highway later became an important highway for military supply which gave the PLA a greater tactical advantage over Southasian countries beyond the Himalayas.³⁷

Norbu was to the point when he said, "In fact, one of the main reasons for the Communist takeover of Tibet is strategic, rather than historical claims or ideological motives."³⁸ With the invasion, Tibet became a prized geopolitical trophy thereby securing China's perceived vulnerable back-door. At the same time, China's hunger for economic growth coincided with Beijing's discovery of Tibet as a vast and till now untapped source of minerals, water and energy. In addition to this, Chinese geologists have identified more than 130 minerals in Tibet with significant reserves of the world's deposits of uranium, chromite, boron, lithium, borax, and other minerals.³⁹ With Tibet under its occupation, China started to implement its true strategic plans.

As early as 1964, the strategic importance of Tibet was recognised and is aptly paraphrased by George Ginsburgs and Michael Mathos in their book *Communist China and Tibet: The First Dozen Years*:

He who holds Tibet dominates the Himalayan piedmont; he who dominates the Himalayan piedmont threatens the Indian subcontinent; and he who threatens the Indian subcontinent may well have all of South Asia within his reach and, with it, all of Asia.⁴⁰

In short, invading Tibet was never about socialist liberation or for any other ideological reasons, nor was it undertaken to expel a handful of foreigners from the Tibetan soil. Rather it was purely strategic in nature and is driven by China's expansionist ambition.⁴¹

Why is “Peaceful Liberation” not Peaceful at all?

China's White Paper itself declared that, “The victory in the Chamdo Battle created the conditions for the peaceful liberation of Tibet.” And the White Paper also proudly proclaims that, “Guided by the central authorities' strategy of outflanking the enemy from various directions, the PLA, with the 18th army as the major force, advanced into Tibet from four directions and won the Battle of Chamdo in October, 1950.”

These statements are contradictory in nature, because no battle or war fought could be peaceful in nature or called a peaceful battle. Also in one of the above statements, it says, “...outflanking the ‘enemy’ [emphasis added] from various directions, the PLA, with the 18th army as the major force, advanced into Tibet...” In its statesponsored narrative and propaganda, China claims it came into Tibet for the liberation of Tibetans and Tibet from the imperialist forces. While on the other hand, China also claims that Tibet has been part of the “big family of motherland China.” Hence, this too is contradictory in nature.

In October of 1949, radio broadcasts were made from Beijing and Xiling in Amdo in north-eastern Tibet that “Tibet was a part of China” and that China's People's Liberation

Army was thus being sent into Tibet to “liberate it from the foreign imperialists.” Zhang Guohua, the Commander of the 18th Field Army in his speech to senior party members declared that, “...We must help our Tibetan brothers liberate themselves from the enslavement of imperialism, and return to the bosom of motherland...” How then could the Tibtans themselves considered ‘the enemy,’ as the white paper does? Hence it proves that the reasons claimed by the Chinese government to “liberate Tibet” was invented and was solely to fulfil China’s political and strategic ambitions.

The battle of Chamdo itself was not peaceful at all. It was asymmetric in nature. It was the battle between 40,000 battle-seasoned PLA troops versus 7,000 or 8,000⁴² ill-equipped Tibetan troops.⁴³ It was carefully planned. Communist China employed the strategies of Sun Tzu, who, in the Art of War, suggested that: “Unless you are kept informed of the enemy’s condition, and are ready to strike at the right moment, a war may drag on for years. The only way to get this information is to employ spies.”⁴⁴ In his autobiography, *My Land and My People*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has captured this machination. He writes: “In 1948, while I was still a student, the government heard there were Chinese Communist spies in the country. They had come to find out how strong our army was, and whether we were receiving military aid from any foreign power.”⁴⁵

Wei Ke, a former propagandist, photographer and Deputy Director of the Department of Youth of the PLA Tibetan Region and the first Party Secretary of Datse County of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region has clearly recorded the conditions of the Tibetan army in his diaries. He writes: “According to investigation, the Tibetan army is numbered between 6000 and 8000. Plus, deployable militia the total does not exceed 30,000. They have 20 outdated artillery pieces and 50 machine guns. They would be easily crushed.”

Hence it is no doubt that the Tibetan soldiers' valour and old weapons were no match for China's 18th Field Army comprising of different divisions such as the 52nd, 53rd, and 54th. Bapa Phuntso Wangye,⁴⁶ too acknowledged the bravery of the Tibetan soldiers and its asymmetrical nature of numbers and weapons with that of Communist China's soldiers. He expresses that, "The Tibetan soldiers fought bravely, but they were no match for the superior numbers and better training of the battle-hardened PLA. The Tibetans could not stop the forward thrust of the Chinese forces, and within two weeks the entire Tibetan army in Chamdo had been captured, along with Ngabo, the new governor-general [and a council minister] who had just replaced Lhalu."⁴⁷

According to Jianglin Li, who is an independent Chinese scholar and writer specialising in post-1950 Tibetan history, the Tibetan diaspora and the author of the book *Tibet in Agony: Lhasa 1959*, she writes, "Number of battles was calculated in different ways. The Sichuan Military Gazetteer counts each military engagement and gives the total number as "over 10,000 big and small battles." She further added that, "...The incomplete statistics shows that during the 6.5-year war, no less than 15,000 battles were fought..."

Matthew Akester, who has translated a summary of the book, *When the Iron Bird Flies: The 1956-1962 Secret War on Tibetan Plateau*, shared his thoughts on the dilemma of getting an accurate information on the history of Tibet from 1956-1962 and he remarks, "Satisfactory confirmation of detail for this period of Tibet's history and China's history is notoriously difficult, due to official secrecy and the virtual non-existence of reliable non-official documentation. The figure assessed here, though incomplete, thus provides crucial indicators of the scale of the PLA's engagement in Tibet at that time, quite sufficient to justify the author's characterization of it as war on a largely unarmed population."⁴⁸

In his biography, Bapa Phuntso Wangye narrates, “Much had happened that I wished would happen, but the fact that many Tibetans had been killed or wounded in the Chamdo campaign saddened me.”⁴⁹ With historical facts and figures mentioned above, it is questionable to call the military invasion as “peaceful liberation” by the Communist China.

In short, the euphemism ‘peaceful liberation’ is similar to the image propagandised and popularized by China today, where the phrase “Peaceful Rise” of China is sold in the market. In reality, the rise of China is not peaceful at all, rather it has been violent, with increasing repression in Tibet, East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia and now Hong Kong.

Endnote

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2. Professor Hong-Shiang Lau is a Chinese scholar and was Chair Professor at the City University of Hong Kong. He retired in 2011 and has since pursued research on Chinese dynastic records. His study of Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Manchurian period official records show that Tibet was never treated as part of China by the ruling dynasties.
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BRIEFING PAPER ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TIBET¹

Overview

Since the military invasion of Tibet by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1950, the Chinese government continues to systematically undermine and destroy the distinct cultural and national identity of the Tibetan people. Despite having undergone repression for more than 70 years, the Tibetan people have kept alive their non-violent struggle with indomitable courage and determination.

Today, our greatest concern is the Chinese government's renewed policy of "consolidating the sense of single Han national identity" (铸牢中华民族共同体意识), aimed at extermination and Sinicization of the Tibetan (and other nationalities) culture, language, religion and way of life.

The new measures in the field of culture, religion, and education, coupled with the unabated Chinese population transfer to Tibet, has not only the effect of overwhelming Tibet's distinct cultural and religious identity but also reduced the Tibetans to an insignificant minority in Tibet. All of these amount to a gradual process of cultural genocide.

The Tibetan plateau, which is the source of fresh water for millions of people in Asia, is threatened by the multiple impacts of climate change, China's detrimental developmental policies, forced relocation of Tibetan nomads and farmers, declaration of so-called natural reserves and national parks, and state engineered settlement of Chinese settlers in Tibet.

There is an urgent need more than ever before to reverse the Chinese government's misguided policy on Tibet. Otherwise, it will result in irreversible damage to the Tibetan identity, natural environment, and peace and stability in the

subcontinent.

No amount of state repression, however brutal and devious, can ever silence the voice of freedom and justice. The unabated peaceful demonstrations and the desperate acts of self-immolations by the Tibetans over the past many decades are clear indications of a much larger problem. Unfortunately, the Chinese leadership still fails to understand the real aspirations of the people in Tibet and the extent of dissatisfaction among the Tibetan people.

The present state of affairs in Tibet does nothing to alleviate the grievances of the Tibetan people or to bring stability and harmony to the People's Republic of China. On our part, the Central Tibetan Administration remains committed to the process of dialogue to bring about a peaceful, negotiated, mutually beneficial, and lasting solution to the Sino-Tibet conflict.

China's Education Policy, Colonial Boarding Schools, and Extermination of Tibetan Language

China's education policy in Tibet aims to complete the Sinicization of Tibetans. From 1985 to 2021, China enrolled over 143,000 Tibetan children, mostly junior high school students, and sent them to the so-called residential Tibet classes and schools in different Chinese provinces and cities under the pretext "to provide them with better education." Separated from their families and traditional culture, Tibetan children are forced to study with Chinese students in the classes and undergo political indoctrination and learn Chinese culture from Chinese teachers who do not know the Tibetan language. They are also sent to Chinese homes to live as foster children.

In the aftermath of the unprecedented uprising in 2008, some Chinese scholars in 2011 proposed the abrogation of the national regional autonomy system and adoption of the

“Second Generation of Nationality’s Policies”, which aims to weaken the identities of the 56 nationalities and strengthen a single Chinese identity (Zhonghua Minzu).² The proposal outlines the withdrawal of “preferential policies for the ethnic minorities”, “encourage ethnic mingling and intermarriage”, and “enforce the use of Chinese language and closure of schools for minorities” which are measures that are now being enforced in Tibet.

In 2012, the Chinese government had to reverse its policy of merging primary schools in villages into boarding schools after facing strong protests in China. However, China’s State Council issued an order in 2015 making it mandatory for children in nationality areas to study, live and grow up in the boarding school system.

The progression of policy shows a systematic shift from limited bilingual education to near-complete Chinese-medium instruction. Current policies visually prioritize Chinese in public spaces and mandate Chinese instruction from kindergarten onward. Policy language deliberately employs ambiguity to implement more restrictive measures than publicly stated. For example, the 2017 announcement that “bilingual education” reached “100 percent coverage” masked the reality that this meant primarily Chinese-medium instruction.

Another new assimilationist policy being currently implemented is the “Children’s Language Homophony Plan for Putonghua (Mandarin) Education for Preschool Children” (教育部办公厅关于实施学前儿童普通话教育“童语同音”计划的通知) ordered by China’s Ministry of Education in 2020. It is being enforced across minorities and rural areas during the current 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).⁴ It enforces preschool children in minorities and rural areas to learn Putonghua, thereby depriving Tibetans of practicing and promoting the Tibetan language.

The PRC government has established and been operating a vast network of colonial boarding schools in Tibet where students live separated from their families and are subjected to highly politicized education, primarily in Chinese. Touted by the PRC government as a means of providing education to a sparse and far-flung population, the schools are the cornerstone of an assimilationist agenda advanced by Chinese President Xi Jinping himself, intended to preempt threats to Chinese Communist Party control by eliminating ethnic differences. The impact of the colonial boarding school experience on Tibetan children and their families – including psychological and emotional trauma – and the implications for whole generations of Tibetans and the long-term survival of Tibetan identity are grave.

Nearly one million Tibetan children, including over 100,000 aged between 4 and 6 in pre-schools, and 800,000 to 900,000 between the ages of 6 and 18 - 78% of Tibetan students - are living in colonial boarding schools.³ Tibetan parents are compelled to send their children to boarding schools due to a lack of alternatives and are unable to advocate for other options in Tibet's repressive environment. Options Tibetan parents used to have – monastery day schools, other privately-run schools, or education in exile in India – are steadily being eliminated. A parent described how her four and five-year-old children felt distressed when they were separated from their parents and would cry for days asking not to be sent away.

Furthermore, since 2021, Chinese authorities have forcibly closed numerous Tibetan-language schools, including the award-winning Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational High School and Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery school (about 500 students). In July 2021, Sengdruk Taktse School in Darlag County was forcibly closed to imparting comprehensive Tibetan cultural education in the Tibetan language with over 500 graduates.⁵ In September 2021, the Chinese authorities

detained 121 Tibetans in Dza Wonpo in Sershul County.⁶ In October 2021, Gaden Rabten Namgyaling School at Drakgo County in eastern Tibet was demolished under the alleged charges of infringing upon local land-use laws. The school provides a blend of both traditional and modern education, including classes in Tibetan language and grammar, Mandarin, and English.⁷ Teachers and students who protested these actions, like Rinchen Kyi and Loten, face “separatism” charges. In Ngaba Prefecture alone, 69 primary schools have been completely closed down.

Likewise, the medium of language for the recruitment exam for government jobs in Tibetan areas was changed from Tibetan to Chinese. This systematic marginalization of Tibetan language represents an existential threat to Tibetan cultural identity and linguistic rights, with increasingly aggressive implementation under Xi Jinping’s leadership.

To further promote the Chinese language, China’s Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress in December 2021 ordered the revocation of the constitutional provisions relating to the rights of the nationalities to teach their languages.⁸ The systematic deprivation of the right to learn and use one’s language is a gross violation of the rights of the ethnic nationalities guaranteed in Article 4 of the Chinese Constitution and Articles 36 and 37 of the Law on National Regional Autonomy. It also clearly shows how the Chinese government is violating various national and international declarations on the protection of languages, including the Declaration of the World Language Resources Protection Conference held in September 2018 in Changsha in China, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, some of which China has signed and ratified.

Tibetan is the only language to preserve the entire range of the Buddha's teachings, which encompasses a system of knowledge governed by a logic that has the potential to contribute to world peace and happiness. Therefore, the misguided policy of eradicating the Tibetan language and culture will not only amount to the destruction of a part of humanity's invaluable heritage but also deprive China of the benefits of a rich multicultural society.

There is widespread condemnation of China's latest instrument of cultural and linguistic assimilation, colonial boarding schools, by the international community, including UN special procedures, European Parliament, government officials, parliamentarians, human rights activists, Tibet Support Groups, and nongovernmental organizations. An independent group of three UN experts has condemned these Chinese boarding schools in their communication sent to the PRC government on 11 November 2022, stating that these schools result in "Tibetan children losing their ability to communicate easily in their native language as well as easily with their grandparents and parents, which contributes to their assimilation and the erosion of their identity." These boarding schools are being described by PRC as "maximizing education opportunities for farmers and herdsmen in remote areas" and "narrowing rural-urban educational gaps," but without providing substantial evidence or information to support their claim.

Official state media doesn't deny the scale of colonial boarding schools in Tibet, instead, it has suggested that it is implementing bi-lingual education in these schools. The bi-lingual education in Tibet in essence downgrades the Tibetan language and imposes the Chinese language as the dominant language in schools and Tibetan society. In practice, the bi-lingual education policy is characterized by the Human Rights Watch as a pedagogy that will lead to the

“ gradual replacement of Tibetan by Chinese as the medium of instruction.”

Dr. Gyalo, an educator and eyewitness, describes these boarding schools,

“Like a gardener ripping a plant by the roots – the CCP is doing everything it can to eradicate us forever... they are brainwashing an entire generation of Tibetan kids so successfully that they won't know how to practice their own culture, language, and religion in their homeland...If this continues then China will end Tibet's 5000 years old civilization.”

Suppression and Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism

Religion is fundamental to the Tibetan way of life, and Buddhism primarily defines the Tibetan national identity. The Tibetan monastic communities are the torchbearers of the preservation and promotion of Tibetan cultural heritage. Therefore, they are also at the forefront of Tibetan resistance to China's rule over Tibet. The Tibetan people's devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and their religion is considered by the CCP as synonymous with separatism and a national security threat, which has resulted in a renewed crackdown on the Tibetan monastic community and freedom of religion.

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) assault against Tibetan Buddhism has intensified and this is evidenced in its forced dismantling of Buddha's statues. One such case that is documented occurred in Drakgo County in eastern Tibet in October 2021. The CCP has ruthlessly destroyed numerous cultural and religious sites including a Buddhist school, 45 giant prayers wheels, a 99-foot-tall statue of the Buddha, a 30-foot tall statue and temple, and the residence of a revered spiritual leader in the county, while those who resisted have faced arbitrary arrests, political re-education, and torture.⁹

Exiled Tibetan monk from Drakgo explained the main reasons for greater Chinese repression are the elimination of Tibetan identity and culture, the elimination of influential Tibetans who are conscious of freedom and rights for Tibetans, and the eradication of Tibetan language and education centers.

Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism, an official policy, was publicly declared on the sidelines of the 19th Party Congress in 2017. To achieve the goals of the Sinicization of religion, structural changes were made in the governance by placing hierarchical communist bodies in charge to oversee the implementation of this policy. The Chinese government attempted not only to usurp the authority of Tibetan Buddhism's tradition of reincarnation but also to make Tibetan Buddhism adapt to Chinese characteristics.

The state interference in religious affairs has reduced the space for the practice of Tibetan Buddhism. Following the revisions in September 2017 to the 2005 regulations on Religious Affairs, the Chinese authorities launched "The Four Standards" policy in the monastic community beginning in 2018, requiring monks and nuns to be "politically reliable" among others. Tibetan monks are strictly surveilled through the forced installation of monitoring apps on their smartphones. They are increasingly subjected to compulsory political education campaigns incorporated into training workshops on the party's religious policy and the Tibetan reincarnation system. Monasteries are barred from giving traditional monastic education and are instead replaced with political indoctrination. Tibetan monks and nuns are forced to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama and those who do not abide by this are expelled from monasteries and are subjected to disrobing, arbitrary detention, and torture. For instance, in May 2019, Yachen Gar in eastern Tibet was forced to expel over 3,600 nuns, monks, and lay practitioners. As a result, a nun from Yachen Gar committed suicide in protest against the "patriotic education" program.

In 2007, the State Administration for Religious Affairs “passed” the “Order No 5” otherwise known as the “Management Measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism.” The measure is squarely aimed at undermining the core belief system of Tibetan Buddhism and to weaken the authority of Tibetan Buddhist leaders in Tibet and exile. In addition, the Chinese government, under the aegis of the Chinese Buddhist Association, launched an online database in January 2016. The database exclusively carries profiles of 1,311 Party-approved reincarnated lamas. Although Beijing maintains that the database will “help protect the legitimate rights and interests of Tibetan Buddhism,” In practice, this database is used by the Communist Party of China as a tool to further curtail the influence and deep-seeded loyalty of the Tibetan people to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This has been seen as an attempt by the Communist Party of China to lay false claims over the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. However, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remains the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people and an admired figure worldwide. Over his reincarnation, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has unequivocally said in his 2011 statement:

“It is particularly inappropriate for Chinese communists, who explicitly reject even the idea of past and future lives, let alone the concept of reincarnate Tulkus, to meddle in the system of reincarnation and especially the reincarnations of the His Holiness the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas. Such brazen meddling contradicts their political ideology and reveals their double standards.

When I am about ninety, I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and re-evaluate whether the institution of the His Holiness the Dalai Lama should continue or not. On that basis, we will take a decision. If it is decided that the reincarnation of the His Holiness the Dalai Lama should continue and there is a need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognized, responsibility

for doing so will primarily rest on the concerned officers of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust.”

In the case of the reincarnation of the 11th Panchen Lama, Jetsun Tenzin Gedhun Yeshe Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo, also known as Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, despite repeated appeals from the United Nations human rights experts and government officials, China has still not revealed the whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama.

Furthermore, the Chinese government has imposed restrictions on the minimum age requirement to join monasteries and nunneries, which in reality, aims to exterminate the monastic community system. For instance, in October 2021, the Chinese authorities expelled over 80 monks below the age of 18 from Dhitsa and Jakhyung monasteries in Bayan County.

Imposing further restrictions on freedom of religion in China, the Chinese government issued a new regulation “Measures on the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services” in December 2021.¹⁰ The regulation has banned all foreign organizations or individuals from spreading religious content online in the country. Reports coming out of Tibet say the authorities have ordered the immediate closure of social media groups formed by Tibetans to share information about pilgrimages and religious observances in Amdo.¹¹ The recent demolition of giant Buddhist statues, prayer wheels, and closure of a monastic school in the Drakgo region in Kham by the Chinese authorities is akin to the disastrous Cultural Revolution.¹²

The Chinese government's repression of religious freedom in Tibet is a gross violation of Article 36 of its constitution, which guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of religious belief.

Arbitrary Arrest, Incarceration, and Surveillance

Tibet's Freedom score for the last two years i.e., 2023 and 2024, has remained zero in Freedom House's Freedom in the World reports, indicating China's ever-increasing repression and control over Tibetans. Any expression against the repressive policies is associated with 'separatism' and dealt with harsh sentences. Since 2009, with limited space to express grievances, Tibetans are compelled to take extreme forms of protest through self-immolation. Till date, at least 157 Tibetans have self-immolated in Tibet out of which 136 succumbed to injuries. For Tibetans, self-immolation, the act of setting oneself on fire, is the ultimate protest against Chinese repression and an explicit call for improved human rights and political reform in Tibet.

The PRC government has routinely detained, tortured, and imprisoned Tibetans who spoke out against the Communist regime and its oppressive policies in Tibet. Tibetan writers, intellectuals, environmentalists, community leaders, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and artists have become a constant target of the Chinese authorities for their expression of views critical of the Chinese government.

Around August 2024, Tulku Hungkar Dorje, a revered Tibetan Buddhist lama and staunch advocate for the preservation of Tibetan language and identity, mysteriously disappeared after publicly calling for cultural protection—only to be confirmed dead months later in late March 2025 under circumstances shrouded in secrecy and state-imposed silence. His arrest and unexplained death, coupled with the closure of the Tibetan schools he founded, reflect the escalating crackdown by Chinese authorities on voices defending Tibet's heritage and spiritual resilience.

Extremely concerning reports of deaths due to torture continues to emerge from Tibet. Gonpo Namgyal, a village

leader advocating for Tibetan language preservation, died on 18 November, shortly after release from detention showing signs of torture. Tsedon, a Tibetan student from Tibet University in Lhasa, was arrested by police in Ritso Township, Nyemo County, on 26 December 2023, with the reasons for her arrest remaining unknown. On 15 January 2024, within weeks into her arrest, her family was notified of her death at the People's Hospital of Nyemo. Losel, a 38-year-old Tibetan monk from Sera Monastery and Tsotoe Village near Lhasa, died in a Chinese prison on 21 October 2024 after enduring prolonged physical beatings and being deliberately denied medical care following his arrest for allegedly communicating with individuals outside Tibet. The true number of such cases is unknown due to extreme information controls in Tibet.

In the last few years, more than hundred Tibetans were known to have been unfairly detained and arrested by the Chinese authorities. Among them, Chinese courts have unfairly sentenced a large number of Tibetans to prison terms ranging from two to fourteen years on trumped-up charges of “inciting separatism”, “endangering state security”, and “leaking state secrets.” More than twenty Tibetans were punished in 2023 alone for possessing a portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and participating in religious activities. In 2024, Chinese authorities arrested and sentenced several Tibetans, including monks Lobsang Samten, Lobsang Trinley, Pema, and Jampa Choephel; civilians Tsering Tashi, Wangkyi, Phuntsok, Samten, Rabgang Tenzin, and singer Gegjom; and writers Gendun Lhundup and Tenzin Khenrab, often without due process or communication with their families. Tibetan singer Palden, writer Gendun Lhundup, monk Rachung Gendun, and Tenzin Khenrab were released during the year after serving sentences for politically sensitive expressions, though most remain under surveillance or suffer ongoing repercussions.

Well-known Tibetan writers who are currently imprisoned include Go Sherab Gyatso, Seynam, Gangbu Yudrum,

Samdup, Tsering Dolma, and Gangkye Drubpa Kyab. They were all sentenced to four to fourteen years of imprisonment for 'inciting separatism' and 'endangering national security.'

In February 2024, Chinese authorities arrested over 1,000 Tibetans, including monks from Wontoe and Yena monasteries, during protests in Derge County against the Kamtok (Ch: Gangtuo) hydropower project, which threatens to submerge six monasteries and displace two villages. Detainees were subjected to severe beatings, prolonged interrogations, and denied adequate food and medical care, with many requiring hospitalization due to the mistreatment.

Surveillance in Tibet is widely characterized as an Orwellian gridlock system. The extensive security measures currently being practiced against Uyghur people were previously practiced and perfected in Tibet by Chen Quanguo, who earlier served as the Party Secretary of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region. In Tibet, Tibetans are subjected to explicit restrictions including local directives prohibiting overseas travel, passport confiscations, and issuing of threats against traveling. Not only were Tibetans prevented from traveling out of the country, but they were also barred from moving within Tibet without authorization.

China's repressive state control apparatus and violation of human rights are now carried through its surveillance networks such as the Great Firewall, surveillance grids, over 200 million surveillance cameras, and other new technologies for social control.¹³ This is aided by artificial intelligence, biometrics, and big data to monitor and shape the minds and behaviors of its citizens.

Communications with foreign journalists and sharing of information invariably lead to arbitrary detentions and unfair

imprisonment. Surveillance in Tibet is widely characterized as Orwellian. In Tibet, over the last decade, surveillance technologies referred to as “nets in the sky and traps on the ground” have further suppressed the fundamental freedom of expression, movements, and assembly effectively turning Tibet into a vast prison. Tibet serves as an experimental ground for China’s surveillance technologies, enabling the implementation of stringent security measures to suppress resistance movements.

Reports by Citizen Lab and Human Rights Watch have found that over 1.2 million Tibetans were subjected to the arbitrary mass collection of DNA that may be abused for surveillance and as an additional repression tool. The mass DNA collection in Tibet is viewed as a component of the Chinese Ministry of Public Security’s wider strategy to acquire population data and exert social control. This practice, unique to the Xi administration, involves collecting DNA from Tibetan people, irrespective of criminal investigations, to enhance the government’s authority over the population of Tibet, whom they perceive as insufficiently loyal to the ruling party.¹⁴

Strict controls govern social media communication, Tibetan radio services are disrupted, and individuals face arrest based on their online expressions. Internet shutdowns are more prevalent in Tibet, accompanied by heightened monitoring by authorities. Chinese authorities closely monitor WeChat and other online communication platforms to identify and punish Tibetans alleged of committing crimes by holding discussions online, as well as restricting what Tibetans could freely share or post online.

Tibetan Buddhist and other religious discussion sites in Tibet have been already restricted by national and local regulations regarding online religious content. Chinese authorities continue to restrict contact between Tibetans in Tibet and those in

exile, threatening to punish those found to have shared any information. The Chinese government has stationed permanent work teams in monasteries and villages to control and monitor the movement of monks and lay people.

Besides its repressive policies domestically, the Chinese government also restricts freedom of speech and expression abroad by targeting foreign government officials and public figures.

“Rewriting Tibet: China’s Campaign to Replace ‘Tibet’ with ‘Xizang’ and Control Historical Narrative”

In a calculated effort to assert its authority and rewrite historical narratives, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has launched a campaign to replace the internationally recognized name “Tibet” with the Mandarin romanization “Xizang.” This initiative was publicly formalized on 14 August 2023, during the International Seminar on Tibetan Studies in Beijing, where the CCP announced its intention to reshape global perceptions of Tibet and consolidate its claim to the region. By narrowing the definition of “Tibet” to refer solely to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and promoting the term “Xizang” through state media, diplomatic communications, and international cultural institutions, China seeks to erase the broader cultural and political identity associated with Tibet, including its historical ties to areas across Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan. The campaign not only reflects China’s growing geopolitical confidence as the world’s second-largest economy but also reveals a strategic attempt to marginalize Tibetan voices and suppress international recognition of their struggle for autonomy. The adoption of “Xizang” by foreign museums, such as the British Museum and France’s Musée du Quai Branly, illustrates the global reach of this linguistic colonization, raising urgent questions about complicity, cultural erasure, and the politicization of language in shaping historical memory.

Environmental Issues and Concerns on the Tibetan Plateau

Tibet's rangeland cover approximately 70% of the total 2.5 million square km. The alpine grassland at high altitudes covers about 60% of the Tibetan rangeland. The Tibetan nomads live an eco-friendly and self-sufficient life for thousands of years. However, under the name of restoring grassland by prohibiting grazing, the Chinese government has removed more than two million Tibetan nomads from their land and pushed them into large-scale permanent settlements with no sustainable medical, educational, business, or employment opportunities to support a dignified life and retain their identity.¹⁵ There are many scientists, including the Chinese, who have written extensively about the need for moderate grazing to maintain the ecosystem's health. The forceful removal of Tibetan nomads who have preserved the grassland has in fact accelerated the desertification of Tibet's fragile natural environment.

Today, in the name of building hard infrastructure and constructing natural reserves, Tibetan nomads and farmers are forced to relocate, thereby, forcibly altering their traditional living environment. The relocation is also pushed under the guise of alleviating poverty, and vocational training and transfer of the 'rural surplus labourers. In the first 7 months of 2020, the TAR trained 543,000 rural surplus labourers, accomplishing 90.5% of its annual goal by July. Of these, 49,900 were transferred to other parts of the TAR, and 3,109 to other parts of China. Each region is assigned a transfer quota. In the context of Beijing's increasingly assimilating ethnic minority policy, it is likely that these policies will promote a long-term loss of linguistic, cultural and spiritual heritage in Tibet.¹⁶

A series of small and large-scale dams are being built on Tibetan rivers to power Chinese cities and exacerbate large-scale resource extraction across Tibet. The 14th Five-Year Plan is the mega blueprint containing billions of dollars worth

of projects, including the controversial hydropower projects on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) close to the borders of Arunachal Pradesh in India. The motive behind the dam frenzy is also to support the mass migration of Han Chinese into certain parts of Tibet, such as Kongpo in southern Tibet. The resource-rich region of Nyingtri in Kongpo is considered ideal for the mass immigration of Han Chinese, as it enjoys a temperate climate with immense forest cover. Hence, the Chinese government has made a huge investment in the rapid construction of highways, railways, airports, and mega dams to facilitate securitization and eventual mass migration of Chinese into the Tibetan region. April 3, 2022, Xinhua report says China plans to invest about 22 billion dollars in infrastructure development in the “Tibet Autonomous Region” to the detriment of the Tibetan people.

The Tibetan plateau, which is the source of Asia’s six largest and most important rivers, provides fresh water and sustains life for some of the world’s most populated nations like India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD Report 2019), more than 1.9 billion people directly depend on rivers originating from the Tibetan Plateau.

The building of dams on Tibet’s transboundary rivers has affected many downstream countries and triggered international criticism, resulting in the formation of the Mekong River Commission. There is no formal agreement between China and downstream countries over sharing of hydrological data, as well as the use of shared river systems. According to a UN report in 2014, by 2025 water scarcity is predicted to affect 1.8 billion people, particularly in Asia. Many scholars and experts have warned about possible future “water wars” between China and India, and the same dynamics could play out in Southeast Asia. Therefore, it is

time to recognize Tibet's strategic importance to regional water security and environmental protection.

According to the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) report titled "Scientific Assessment of Tibetan Plateau Environmental Change", the Tibetan plateau is already warming two times faster than the global average. CAS scientists predict that temperatures on the Tibetan plateau will increase by up to 4.6 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. The effects of these changes are becoming more evident in the form of melting glaciers, intensified weather events, increasing desertification, and degraded grasslands.

China's development policies in Tibet are carried out without environmental assessment and consultation with the local community. It is recently reported that in Rebkong in Amdo, Tibetan farmers in seven villages were forced to vacate their land and only ten days of notice was issued to uproot from their ancestral land for the construction of a hydropower dam. Earlier 10 Tibetans have been imprisoned in Sangchu in Amdo for resisting similar order.

Way Forward

In view of the critical situation in Tibet as mentioned above, we appeal to the concerned offices to encourage the Chinese leadership to undertake the following:

1. Resume dialogue with the envoy/s of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to resolve the Sino-Tibetan conflict through the Middle-Way Approach without preconditions.
2. Revisit and revise the historical narrative of Tibet to provide legitimacy and leverage to the Middle Way Policy.
3. Point out China's wrong policies and programs in Tibet and call on China to stop or correct the misguided policies.

4. Form alliances with like-minded countries to pass similar Resolutions and Acts in line with the U.S. Government.
5. Amend its current so-called bilingual education policy, which marginalizes the Tibetan language and uproots the younger generation of Tibetans from their culture and religion.
6. Cease its policy of interference in the traditional reincarnation of Trulkus, Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and suppression of the religious freedom of Tibetans.
7. Highlight Tibet as the Third Pole at major national and international environmental forums.
8. Reverse the policy of forced relocation of Tibetan nomads and include Tibetan participation in environmental stewardship by using their centuries-old wisdom of having lived on the Tibetan Plateau.
9. Reduced dam building on Tibet's transborder rivers, considering the lives of downstream riparian countries.

End notes

1. Tibet comprises three provinces of U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham
2. Jamestown Foundation <https://jamestown.org/program/toward-a-second-generation-of-ethnic-policies/>
3. China's vast system of colonial boarding schools inside Tibet <https://tibetaction.net/campaigns/colonialboardingschools/>
4. 教育部办公厅关于实施学前儿童普通话教育“童语同音”计划的通知 http://www.moe.gov.cn/srcsite/A18/s3129/202108/t20210802_548318.html
5. Tibetans Detained in Karze Language Rights Arrests Are Denied Proper Food, Medical Care <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/denied-09152021161552.html>
6. Tibetan school forcibly demolished by Chinese state <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2021/12/6/tibetan-school-forcibly-demolished-by-chinese-state>

7. *ibid*
8. 全国人民代表大会常务委员会法制工作委员会关于2021年备案审查工作情况的报告 <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c30834/202112/2606f90a45b1406e9e57ff45b42ceb1c.shtml>
9. Desecration in Drago County: January 2023 Destruction of Tibetan religious heritage, arbitrary detentions and torture <https://freetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Drago-County.pdf>
10. Overseas organizations, individuals not allowed to operate online religious info services within the Chinese territory: regulations <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202112/1242971.shtml>
11. China announces further restrictions on Buddhism on the internet <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2022/2/2/china-announces-further-restrictions-on-buddhism-on-the-internet>
12. CHINA: Cultural Revolution-like crackdown in Drakgo Buddhist Monastery <https://hrwf.eu/china-cultural-revolution-like-crackdown/>
13. China installed news surveillance in Tibet ahead of its 1959 anniversary <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2019/6/17/china-installed-new-surveillance-in-tibet-ahead-of-1959-anniversary>
14. Citizen Lab, Mass DNA Collection in the Tibet Autonomous Region from 2016-2022 <https://citizenlab.ca/2022/09/mass-dna-collection-in-the-tibet-autonomous-region/>
15. Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/27/they-say-we-should-be-grateful/mass-rehousing-and-relocation-programs-tibetan>
16. Jamestown Foundation <https://jamestown.org/program/jamestown-early-warning-brief-xinjiangs-system-of-militarized-vocational-training-comes-to-tibet/>

CHINA'S POLICIES ON TIBETAN LANGUAGE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Mao Zedong's Policy (Strategic and Enforced Assimilation) (1949 - 1976)

Since the invasion of Tibet, from 1951 to 1976, the party-state has concentrated largely on the strategic developments and entrenchment of defense infrastructures. The central objective of China is to prevent the emergence of modern Tibetan nationalism that would separate Tibet from China.

The Chinese Communist Party followed a 'United Front' strategy, which involved expanding their influences toward the upper social stratum of Tibet. However later, an increase in the number of Chinese administrators in Tibet caused increased friction with the Tibetan population. Gradually, China extended its control over the machinery of government. All these concessions were provisional and soon the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was deployed in the 1950 takeover of Tibet and the 1959 revolt against China. The infringement of the value and social systems of Tibet led to the revolt of 1959.

During the Cultural Revolution, in February 1966, for the first time, the Chinese authorities banned the celebration of the Monlam ceremony in Lhasa. The Cultural Revolution led to the systematic campaign to destroy Tibet's separate identity. The Chinese also propagated a policy of total assimilation and Tibetan identity was reduced to the language alone and that too had come under attack.

The Immediate Cause of the Revolt of 1959

The immediate cause for the revolt of the Tibetan people was a strange invitation made to the Dalai Lama to attend a theatre performance in the Chinese military camp on 10 March 1959. In short, the revolt broke out when the threat presented by the occupying Chinese Communists concerned

the Dalai Lama, the symbol of Buddhist doctrine, as well as Tibet's cultural and national identity.

Deng Xiaoping's Policy (1978 - 1989)

From 1978 to 1982, Deng implemented Tibet policies that were relatively liberal and pragmatic.

Unlike the earlier policy of forced assimilation, the idea of assimilation by natural acculturation was promoted. Under the new policy, it involves enticing of Tibetan leaders and their support for the Four Modernisations and the CCP. Liberalization also led to the influx of the Chinese into Tibetan regions. The relaxed environment of the 1980s created the environment for a revival of Tibetan Buddhism in all Tibetan regions. Not only this, during his regime, he allowed limited religious freedom in the region and opened the door for talks with the Dalai Lama and his representatives.

Liberalization was intentional since ideology and coercion had failed during the Maoist era. These relaxed policies allowed space for dissent up until the late 1980s and revealed the intense devotion that most Tibetan still felt towards the Dalai Lama. One of the most important benefits of reform has been the relaxation of restrictions on religious practices. According to a 1987 official estimate, 740 monasteries and other religious sites had been renovated since 1983, and a further 230 were still being repaired. There were then 15,000 monks in the TAR, compared with an estimated 114,000 before 1959. The government has financed restoration work at important buildings, such as the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, but in most cases, repair work is supported by private donations. The main motivation behind the support is to prevent religious institutions from getting out of control.

During this period of liberalization, because of the lifting of the restrictions on Chinese entering Tibet and hence around

1984, Chinese settlers started moving to Tibet in great numbers. Beijing's plans to develop Tibet attracted tens of thousands of Chinese laborers and investors whose presence began changing the cultural, economic, and demographic landscape of Tibet. In 1950, there were limited numbers of Chinese in central Tibet, whereas by 1988 there were approximately a million Chinese in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) alone. For instance, according to official sources, in the summer of 1984 over 10,000 self-employed workers entered Tibet.

Implications

While the liberalization of some policies gave Tibetans new confidence to assert their identity, the policy of population transfer exacerbated their grievances against what they saw as a second invasion. The influx of thousands of Chinese signaled a further threat to their new-found freedom and identity. This new manifestation of cultural unity heightened the collective sense of belonging among Tibetans. The fusion of all these forces reinforced Tibetan national identity. Between 1987 and 1991, over 3000 Tibetans were held in detention without trial and Tibetans received prison sentences. Human rights groups such as Amnesty International reported systematic use of torture.

The Immediate Cause of the 1987-89 Uprising

The sparks of the protests were the execution of the two Tibetans in late September 1987 and derogatory remarks about the Dalai Lama by the Chinese officials in the official media.

Jiang Zemin's Policy (Coercive Stabilization, Leapfrog (Rapid) Economic Development, and Public Denunciation of the Dalai Lama) (1993 - 2003)

In July 1990, CCP's General Secretary, Jiang Zemin made an official visit to Tibet. This was the first visit by a Party General

Secretary since Hu Yaobang's visit to Tibet 10 years earlier. The themes of the Third National Work Forum on Tibet in 1994 in Beijing were "Development and Stability" and the title of the final document was "Decision to Accelerate Development and Maintain Stability in Tibet." Hence, acceleration of development and stricter enforcement of stability were given priorities.

Jiang Zemin underscored the importance of Tibet and observed that maintaining stability in Tibet was "Crucial to the success of reforms, developments, and stability throughout the country."

During his period, the policy implemented in Tibet came to be known as grasping with both hands. It is similar to the Carrot and Stick policy. It involved accelerated economic development through massive state subsidies and investment and ruthless enforcement of stability in Tibet through the use of police, military, and other security agencies against Tibetan nationalism. There was also renewed drive against the Dalai Lama's spiritual and political authority. This was done through the frequent and open denunciation of the Dalai Lama by the Chinese authorities. Taking into account the importance of culture in Tibetan nationalism, the authorities made a vigorous effort to assimilate the distinctiveness of Tibetan identity. This became further official when Jiang Zemin remarked that "It is also necessary for the Tibetans to absorb the fine cultures of other nationalities to integrate the fine traditional cultures with the fruits of modern culture. This will facilitate the development of socialist new culture in Tibet." Beijing implemented stricter control on religious activities such as the prohibition on display and possession of photographs of the Dalai Lama and bringing the monasteries and other institutions under Beijing's regulation. For instance, in Tibet, when the Patriotic Education Campaign (PEC) was first launched in 1996, monks and nuns were special targets because of the centrality of religion to Tibetan national

identity. The main goals of the PEC were to undermine the influence of the Dalai Lama, to teach the Chinese version of Tibet's history to the Tibetans, and to promote atheism and materialist values.

Implications

According to Robbie Barnett, the monks from Drepung monastery who initiated the protests on 10 March 2008 had several reasons to be antagonized about China's policies in Tibet, such as restrictions on religion and culture introduced in 1994 to erode the suspected sources of Tibetan nationalism.

The introduction of the Patriotic Education Campaign and public denunciation of the Dalai Lama further escalated the sense of nationalism and insecurity about Tibetan identity.

Xi Jinping (Securitization, Sinization of Tibetan Buddhism, Militarization, and Intensification of Enforced Assimilation and Instrumentalization of Laws) (2013 - Present)

With the ascent of Xi Jinping, the crackdowns on Tibet, East Turkestan, and Inner Mongolia have intensified. Now the Chinese Communist Party is on the way to instrumentalizing the constitution and excluding the enshrined ethnic language rights. According to anthropologist Yang of Shizuoka University, "The CCP is now amending local regulations, and the next step is to change the constitution, getting rid of the language that all ethnic groups have the right to use their language" He further suspected that soon, "All the autonomous regions will be changed to provinces as well."

Beginning March 2022, the language learning app *Talkmate* and the online video streaming *Bilibili* have remove Tibetan and Uyghur languages from their platforms as a result of government policy.

The Discriminative education and language policies imposed by the Chinese authorities inside Tibet are increasing day by day in Tibet, thus leading to further sinicization. With the recent developments in Tibet, in the days to come, this author estimates that soon there will further crackdown on online teaching of the Tibetan language on social media.

For the past few years, a series of notices and new laws are instrumentalized to create of an environment where Tibetan children are prevented from learning the Tibetan language. For instance, in the 14th Five-Year Plan of the Chinese government, which was adopted on 11 March 2021 by the National People's Congress (NPC). In Article XLIII, it says:

“...We will improve the assurance mechanisms for inclusive preschool education, special education, and professional education and increase the gross enrollment rate in preschool education to over 90%. We will raise the quality and level of education in ethnic minority regions and intensify efforts to popularize the national common language and writing system...”

The above plan indicates that the Chinese government intends to intensify and popularize the “national common language” and writing system, which is Mandarin. Through this, now the party-state has made it clear that they now intend to eliminate the source of social stability by eradicating the sense of Tibetan identity among the younger generations through intensive indoctrination and propaganda. The Tibetan language is one of the most important factors, which gives a sense of Tibetan identity to the younger generations. Hence, the Chinese government has re-strengthened its onslaught on the Tibetan language.

The PRC government operates a large number of boarding schools throughout Tibet. Nearly a million Tibetan children are being forcibly subjected to an indoctrination campaign

which involves studying only Chinese language subjects and expressing faith and loyalty to the CCP ideology and rule. With its deliberate targeting of the entire generation of Tibetan children, this disturbing policy could potentially eliminate Tibetan identity.

According to the Radio Free Asia (RFA), in October 2021, a notice was issued to all the districts and cities of the Tsongon (Ch: Qinghai) region of Tibet, forbidding individuals and organizations to hold any informal classes to teach the Tibetan language during winter holidays. The RFA's source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, the notice roughly says:

“No individual or organization is allowed to hold informal classes or workshops to teach the Tibetan language during the winter holidays when the schools are closed.”

A few months before, the Chinese authorities in Tsongon (Qinghai) region closed down a few private schools. Darlang County in the Golog was closed without any explanation on 8 July 2021. With different notices and decrees, the Chinese government has already started a region-wide clampdown on schools promoting Tibetan culture and offering instruction in the Tibetan language.

Analysis

Despite such tremendous pressure from local and state governments, the Tibetan people have resisted. The large-scale protests in 2008 during the Beijing Olympics remain a vivid testimony of their resistance, while the 2010 student protests in Tibet reveal the dissatisfaction of Tibetans across generations with the Chinese policies aimed at marginalizing and assimilating their unique language and culture.

These incidents show that the policies implemented in Tibet are not being accepted by the younger or elder generations

who have lived through the discriminating education policies of the CPC. It is high time to revise the education policies to cater to the legitimate needs of the Tibetans, a policy that benefits them, their future, and their cultural heritage.

In March 2013, China unveiled another double-digit rise in military expenditure at the opening of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference's annual meeting. But for the third year in a row, the defense budget was exceeded by spending on domestic security, highlighting Beijing's concern about internal threats. In 2014, domestic security spending was only 0.8 percent higher than defense-related expenses. However, by 2016 this gap reached a record of 13 percent. Domestic security spending that year increased by 17.6 percent, the highest rate since 2008, and exceeded 1 trillion RMB for the first time. Spending on internal security continues to rise because of the CCP's sense of rising insecurity.

In Tibet too, the CCP's security spending has increased exponentially. Since 2008, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) "has had the highest per-capita domestic security expenditure of all provinces and regions," researcher Adrian Zenz found. "In 2016, per capita, domestic security expenses in Sichuan's Tibetan regions were nearly three times higher than for Sichuan province as a whole." Hence, the source of stability in Tibet is increasing domestic security spending.

According to Tsering Shakya, he highlights the impacts of increased surveillance and politically-motivated development in Tibet in the following words:

"Like all states faced with separatist demands, the government adopts two strategies: increased surveillance to control the local population and pumping money into the affected areas to induce cooperation and compliance. These policies are

problematic, as the increased economic development does not induce greater acceptance, and the greater surveillance in the form of restrictions on movement and controlling cultural production has the effect of arousing a greater sense of Tibetan victimization.”

The work of Adrian Zenz and James Leibold also talks about the risks due to the increasing securitization in Xinjiang, which can be related to the situation in Tibet. They argue one risk “is that heavy-handed securitization exacerbates ethnic tensions. Despite the absence of major incidents, hatred and resentment continue to simmer below the surface.” Tsering Topgyal has argued that the chief cause of the 2008 uprising in Tibet was insecurity about Tibetan identity. He further added that “...The harsh crackdown and continuing repression have fuelled great resentment and insecurity among the Tibetans. The insecurity dilemma has not finished its tragic run and it seems just a matter of time before the Tibetans vent their pent-up fury again.”

In other words, the increasingly intrusive surveillance, leading to the infringement of one's privacy, may become a cause for future unrest. In 2012, James Leibold, a leading scholar on ethnic policies in China and Tibet, wrote a commentary in *The Diplomat*, entitled “Can China Have a Melting Pot?” It now seems clear that, if the CCP continues its current ongoing repressive policies in Tibet and Xinjiang, it will have boiling pots, rather than melting pots, in its backyard.

CHINA'S POLICIES ON TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Introduction

Tibetan culture and religion are strongly interconnected and difficult to differentiate. All the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism have a role in Tibetan culture in terms of propagating education and preserving not only the religion but also the rich cultural heritage and language of Tibet. Tibetan monasteries as a whole have played a major role in learning and development even before Tibet had an established modern education system. Monasteries are not only centers for transmitting Buddhist education but are also involved in imparting knowledge on medicine, astrology, art, literature, and politics. Therefore, monasteries consist of many thousands of texts, which can be acknowledged as a treasure house of auxiliary science in Tibet.

Before the Chinese invasion in 1959, Tibet was a fully independent nation where the majority of Tibetan people followed Tibetan Buddhism, but at the same time, Bon tradition, Muslim and Hindu minorities were treated equally.

Genesis of the Policy

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, five men have principally shaped the ruling Chinese Communist Party and the nation: Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao, and Xi Jinping.

Mao Zedong (1876 - 1976)

In the 17-point agreement of 1951, the communist party promised to respect Tibetan tradition and religion. However, China's oppressive actions have continuously targeted Tibetan Buddhism, and they became more pronounced during Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966-1976).

Mao's Cultural Revolution: 1966 - 1976

Cultural Revolution have existed in Tibet since 1959, when the Chinese People's Republic of China occupied Tibet and carried out repressive campaigns, such as democratic reform, fomenting class struggle, and imposing communes. "More than 97 percent of monasteries and nunneries were destroyed and the number of monks and nuns living in the monasteries was reduced by 93 percent," the 10th Panchen Lama wrote a famous 70,000-character petition in 1962. Chinese authorities banned the celebration of the Monlam ceremony in Lhasa in February 1966 by ridiculing it as a waste of resources and putting an end to religious devotions by those considered to favor the old society, who were subjected to a "struggle session". Tibetan religion, culture, identity, and traditional way of life continued to be attacked during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. Bans on mani walls, incense burning, circumambulation and prostration were imposed, and monks and nuns were sent to labor camps. Books and religious texts were thrown in the river, burned or mixed with dung as poisonous weeds.

Majority of the schools were closed and Tibetan and Chinese students formed Red Guard brigades to attack the "four olds" of old thoughts, old customs, old habits and old cultures. Tibetan Buddhists' most sacred temple, the Jokhang temple, was plundered, destroyed, and desecrated beyond repair by the communists. The Cultural Revolution left more than 6,000 monasteries and religious institutions in Tibet in ruin, and millions of ancient and priceless manuscripts were destroyed. Bronze, silver, and gold statues were removed from temples and shipped to China. The total number of monks and nuns was 592,558, out of which 110,000 were brutally murdered and 250,000 were forcedly disrobed. The psychological trauma and physical torture Tibetans suffered during public "struggle sessions" and imprisonment is beyond comprehension.

Deng Xiaoping (1978 - 1989)

In the late 1970s, with reformers like Deng Xiaoping and his policy of liberalization, Tibet experienced relative cultural and religious freedom. The official authorization of religious worship in China under Deng Xiaoping was followed by the rehabilitation of numerous victims of the Cultural Revolution. After thirteen years of total interdiction of religious practice and the destruction of religious sites, the PRC government sought to restore and repair the damage suffered by monasteries and their communities. The amount of investment made in developing museums in order to attract tourists has steadily increased. There was a feeling of slight liberality among Tibetans regarding their expression of religious freedom, since the main objective was to boost China's economy through the facilitation of tourism. During his presidentship tenure, in 1979, the first Tibetan delegation from Dharamshala visited Tibet. A notable cultural revival took place in Tibet when reformers like Hu Yaobang and the 10th Panchen Lama took the initiative.

Jiang Zemin (1989 - 2004)

The main objective of the policy was to counter Tibetan nationalism by focusing primarily on social stability and economic development. Jiang Zemin encapsulated this view in a famous slogan: "grasping with both hands." The stability and development of Tibet are, according to him, prerequisites for each other such that, if stability is maintained, development can take place. In the event that the issue of development is adequately addressed, stability will be able to find a sound foundation, so stability is a precondition, and development is of fundamental importance.

Chen Kuiyan became the party secretary (1992-2000) of the so-called TAR resulting in hard-line policies and greater control of Tibetan religion, culture, and language. Few of these hard-line

policies and regulations includes anti-Dalai Lama campaign, patriotic re-education, and migration of Chinese settlers into Tibet. In 1994, the PRC authorities initially began imposing restrictions on photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama punishing anyone who are found in possession of the pictures of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Tibet Daily formally declared the ban on 5 April 1996. Attacks on Tibetan Buddhism as a foreign culture began under Chen Kuiyan in July 1997.

The abduction of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima took place in the backdrop of the strict policy being carried out in Tibet in relation to the Tibetan Buddhism. After the abduction of the Panchen Lama, on 8 November 1995, it was ordered to gather more than 70 people, including Tulkus and lamas, within five provinces (Yunan, Sichuan, Tsongon, and Gansu) in Beijing. He also mandated people to denounce the Panchen Lama, recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1995 as Tibet's second-ranking spiritual leader. Thereby, adopting the golden urn as a practice in the finding of teachers and tulku reincarnation.

In monastic community, the PRC's educational policy of "patriotic re-education" campaigns were heavily enforced and implemented targeting the Tibetan monks and nuns. For instance, the campaign began in April 1996, from Dondupling monastery in Dechen County. In September 1997, in Chechen county in China's Sichuan province, 220 out of 250 monks were expelled from Chokhor Monastery. Only around 110 monks are left in Ngaba's Dondu Monastery. In Kirti Monastery, out of 2300 monks, 1700 were expelled. In Tsongon (Qinghai) Province, Dagkar Monastery saw 800 monks expelled out of 1100 monks in Chapcha County. In Sershul County, 40 monks out of 100 were expelled from Chokhor Monastery. 200 monks were expelled out of 500 monks in Jachung Monastery. In 1999, Bora Monastery in Sangchu County, Gansu Province, experienced the eviction of 40 monks.

From 1996 until 1999, a total of 11409 monks were expelled and 55541 were arrested in Tibet.

Hu Jintao (2004 - 2012)

Hu Jintao personally accused His Holiness the Dalai Lama of engaging in “Tibet independence” activities and “sabotaging” social stability in the strategic Himalayan region. On 30 April 1990, Hu Jintao made a four-point opinion on “carrying out the anti-separatist struggle in Tibet to the end”, which was nominally four measures to further carry out the “anti-separatist struggle” in Tibet. Furthermore, he strengthens the management of the reincarnation of the living Buddha. He also strengthened and innovated the management of temples and religious activities.

Current Status and Policy

Xi Jinping (14 March 2013 - Present)

China’s oppressive actions have continuously targeted Tibetan Buddhism, and since Xi Jinping’s rise to power in November 2012, more drastic changes have been introduced within China, Tibet, East Turkistan (Xinjiang), and Inner Mongolia. Monks were expelled and forcibly enrolled in government schools and are further banned from engaging in religious activities. He forcibly called for Tibetan Buddhism to adapt to Socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Wang Junzheng, party secretary in the Tibet Autonomous Region, instructed monastery management committees in both places to enforce rules against assertions of Tibetan cultural and national identity deemed “separatist” by Chinese authorities. Wang visited Ramoche temple in Lhasa and Gaden monastery outside the capital, reminding monks to be “patriotic and law-abiding” citizens and remain loyal to the party, reported various Chinese state media.

China has been repeatedly accused of imposing restrictions on religious freedom in Tibet, and the oppression has continued during Xi Jinping's rule, during which drastic measures have been introduced within the region.

White Paper on Religion in 2018

In 2018, the Chinese government released a white paper titled "China's Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief. However, the title of the white paper itself is misleading. For instance, in the white paper, the party-state has indirectly ordered the religious groups to support its leadership and to follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The white paper states:

It also means guiding religious groups to support the leadership of the CPC and the socialist system; upholding and following the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics; developing religions in the Chinese context; embracing core socialist values; carrying forward China's fine traditions; integrating religious teachings and rules with Chinese culture; abide by state laws and regulations; and accept state administration following the law.

The above directions apply to every religion in China. The white paper further added that "according to General Secretary Xi Jinping's report at the 19th CPC National Congress held in 2017, China will fully implement the Party's basic policy on religious affairs, uphold the principle that religions in China must be Chinese in orientation, and provide active guidance to religions so that they can adapt themselves to the socialist society."

In the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), too, the party-state has stated that "We will implement the Party's basic guiding principles on religious work, adhere to the direction of the sinicization of China's religions, and actively guide the

mutual adaptation of religions and socialist society.” In short, from the past few years of development in China, one may conclude that there is a growing sinicization of religions in China, including Tibetan Buddhism.

On 3-4 December 2021, Xi Jinping has emphasized the need to “further uphold the principle that religions in China must be Chinese in orientation” during a national conference on work related to religious affairs held in Beijing. He further called for strengthening the management of online religious affairs and “effectively address prominent problems that affect the sound inheritance of religions in China.” Control and management of online religious affairs have remained strict and stressful. For instance, surveillance police unit were installed by authorities inside and outside the premises of the Palyul Thartang Gonchen Monastery in Qinghai province’s Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The Chinese authorities have also installed a specific app on the mobile phones of monks and nuns to identify and track their conversations.

On 20 December 2021, “Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services” was released. According to the regulation, all foreign organizations and individuals will be banned from spreading religious content online. Article 17 of the regulation states that one “must not organize the carrying out of religious activities online and must not broadcast religious rites such as obeisance to Buddha, burning incense, ordinations, services, mass, or baptisms through means such as text, images, audio, or video, either live or in recordings.” Article 29 reads “Where articles 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, or 19 of these measures are violated, they are to collaborate with the internet information departments, competent departments for telecommunications, public security organs, state security organs, and so forth to give punishments following relevant laws and administrative regulations.” The drastic regulation has been effective since 1 March 2022.

China's State Administration for Religious Affairs promulgated the "Measures for the Administration of Religious Activity Sites" or the "Order Number 19," marking a significant escalation in the ongoing crackdown on religious freedom. The United Front Work Department of the PRC government announced the regulation on 31 July 2023. This regulation requires Buddhist temples, monasteries, mosques, etc. to obtain official permission to carry out any religious activity that is targeted to strengthen and build a strong sense of Chinese nationalism. This will be achieved through publicity and education campaigns including promotion of Chinese language and "ethnic unity". In particular, Article 27 of the Order No. 19 stipulates that members of the management organisation of religious activity sites must be "loyal supporters of the leadership and rule of the Chinese Communist Party" and "be mainland residents with Chinese nationality." Under this unlawful regulation, Tibetan monasteries in Tibet that refuse to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama or express reverence and loyalty to His Holiness, whom the PRC considers as "separatist", remain particularly vulnerable to face crackdown by the Chinese authorities.

The policy was to gradually eliminate the rich heritage and culture of Tibet and to portray Tibetan Buddhism as a superstitious belief system, thereby painting Tibetans as backward. State interference in monastic education is especially troublesome, as this not only affects the educational goals of the Tibetan people but also results in the degeneration of essential Buddhist studies and practices.

Estimated number of declinations of monks at the three great monasteries in Tibet caused by death, forced expulsion, or banishment:

Monastery	Before 1959	After 1959
Sera	7997	300
Drepung	10000	400
Gaden	8600	180

Analysis

The core of Tibetan Buddhism requires intensive study sessions, contemplation, and strict practices. The role of Tibetan Buddhism has often been a major flashpoint. Given its strong identification with Tibetan culture and identity. The PRC authorities view Tibetan Buddhism as a challenge to state legitimacy. The majority of Tibetan political prisoners continue to be monks and nuns. To wipe out nationalist sentiments, many working committees like the Tibet Autonomous Region Religious Affairs Commission, the Tibetan Buddhist Association, the Temple Democratic Management Committee, the Socialist Education Working Group, and the Public Security Bureau were implemented.

Prominent religious figures are often persecuted and harassed by PRC government officials. They are believed to have the potential to influence the local population into becoming politically active against Chinese assimilationist policies. In some cases, they were put behind bars, while in others they remained under house arrest, as in the case of Khenpo Jigme Phunstok of Serthar Larung Ghar. Consequently, there were many protests against the government, the most notable of which was the Tibetan uprising of 2008, which demonstrates the courage and sacrifice of the Tibetan people. Due to the increasing repression, monks and nuns committed the majority of self-immolations. Whatever harsh policies may be implemented in Tibet, they are meant to undermine the very existence of Tibetan identity, culture, language, and religion.

CHINA'S EVOLVING SURVEILLANCE STRATEGIES IN TIBET

Introduction

Today, China is perfecting a vast network of real-time sensor technologies such as drones, remote sensing, and GPS tracking; these technologies have provided unprecedented surveillance power. Artificial intelligence technologies, particularly big data analysis and applications such as facial and voice recognition, and a vast database on DNA samples collected from Tibetans, have also substantially elevated the surveillance capacity of social control. This has evidently made China as a leading contender for the world's largest surveillance states.

Surveillance appears to be an inherent attribute of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) behavior. China achieved fully functioning connectivity to the internet in 1994. By mid-2023, an estimated 1.5 billion people had access to the internet in China with the penetration rate standing at 73.7%. A year after the resumption of leadership, President Xi Jinping's (习近平) rule has been characterized by acceleration in development of artificial intelligence, repression of civil society, and strengthening ideological control. His tenure in China has seen a combination of communication crackdown, ramped-up propaganda, and rapid expansion of surveillance with the introduction of continuous efforts to bring new laws and changes in the Cyber Administration of China (CAC).

China's evolving algorithmic surveillance system relies on the security organs of the communist party to filter, collect, and analyze staggering volumes of data flowing across the internet. In China, the mass surveillance with highly advanced technology is being used as an instrument to its authoritarian rule. For many critics, this seems fraught with danger: an Orwellian world where "Big Brother" is always

watching, able to spy on anyone from human rights lawyers to political dissidents, activists, persecuted minorities and even unsuspecting ordinary citizens.

The Chinese government is experimenting with a new system of surveillance in Tibet as part of its overt and covert expansion of government intervention and surveillance. Over the years, China's surveillance system in Tibet has been growing and evolving at an unprecedented scale in grassroots-level control systems. The abundance of manned and unmanned checkpoints, Artificial Intelligence (AI), CCTV camera networks, and re-education centers under the garb of national security have added another layer of suppression to an already extremely oppressive environment in Tibet.

Alarming, this surveillance system is increasingly exported to many countries all around the world. The advanced technical capacity gained by using AI tools to monitor and surveil Tibetans, along with mass surveillance and censorship policies including disinformation campaigns, further worsens the deteriorating human rights situation inside Tibet. As it continues to amass more data and develop new ways to process it, the Party dangles the promise of a perfectly engineered society; one in which the government has the potential to watch everything they see and track everything they do. Now people can be nudged and cajoled by invisible algorithms delivering personalized content to their phones. Inside Tibet, people are living in a vigorously designed, managed, and curate information bubble that the government made intense efforts to subjugate Tibet and its people.

The earliest signs of China's construction of three 5G stations in Tibet were seen in January 2019. The Chinese government will likely take advantage of 5G to advance the use of AI in centralized surveillance. In future, where a variety of activities will revolve around AI, analysts believe that 5G represents a

huge opportunity for the government to collect even more data, allowing it to further monitor critics and stifle opposition.

China has employed a range of cyber security laws, Internet surveillance strategies, data mining, and censorship measures to control Internet Service Providers (ISPs), Internet content providers (ICPs), Internet subscribers, and Internet café users. Regulations over internet access have grown more comprehensive, specific, and extensive, with the State Council giving the Ministry of Public Security the overall responsibility for internet supervision. Surveillance in authoritarian states is not simply a means to achieve a particular policy objective but an enabling mechanism that reinforces the complete political dominance of the state.

Genesis of the Policy

China is aggressively finding ways to filter and control access to information for citizens within its assumed borders. China filters a significant portion of content that pertains to its own dismal human rights record. The consistent and stringent regulation of the Internet by the government results in a lack of transparency within the system and trust deficiency on the part of its citizens.

Surveillance in Tibet is widely characterized as “Orwellian.” In addition to the traditional security surveillance apparatus, including military, police, and neighborhood spies, modern surveillance technologies have been specifically developed and tested in Tibet. The extensive security measures currently being employed against Uyghurs were previously practiced and perfected in Tibet by Chen Quanquo, who earlier was the Party Secretary of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Following his highly repressive policies in Tibet, Chen was appointed the Party Secretary in East Turkistan and continues to be the chief architect of the region’s massive surveillance and detention systems

The concept of mass surveillance in China emerged during Mao's era after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Mao introduced a mechanism of control that encompassed the entire nation and its people to strengthen his power in the newly founded PRC.

In the early years, especially during the era of the Cultural Revolution, mass surveillance was practiced through disseminating information by word of mouth. People kept a watchful eye on one another and reported inappropriate behaviors that infringed upon the dominant social ideals of the time. Under Mao's regime, cities were split into grids of socialist work units where access to rations, housing, and other benefits was enforced by local spies who reported on "wayward" behaviors of their neighbors. This system of social control was used to build a model of communal self-policing.

In 2005, the Chinese government created a mass surveillance system called Skynet. The government revealed Skynet's existence in 2013, by which time the network included over 20 million cameras. In addition to monitoring the general public, cameras were installed on the streets, in the monasteries in Tibet, and the homes of dissidents. The Great Firewall, an all-encompassing internet censorship system, was deployed in China as early as 1996, under the direction of the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, at which time the initiative was called the Golden Shield Project.

In 2011, the central government, in an effort to prevent a recurrence of the protests that spread across Tibet in 2008, launched an intrusive campaign known as "Benefit the Masses." The campaign involved sending 21,000 Communist Party cadres from townships and urban areas to live in teams of four or more in each of the 5,000 villages in the "TAR".

In January 2012, following instructions from China's then President Hu Jintao, the so-called TAR government announced that it would implement the grid system as the key to "social stability maintenance" in Tibet, thus "putting a dragnet into place to maintain stability." New offices, known as grid unit offices, were established in towns to provide enhanced security management at the block level.

In February 2013, Yu Zhengsheng, a Standing Committee member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the top official in China in charge of policies concerning ethnic minorities, confirmed that the system should be put into effect throughout the region to form "nets in the sky and traps on the ground," an indication that the system is primarily designed for surveillance and control. In May 2013, a network of local reporting systems known as the Advanced Double-Linked Household System was set up throughout Tibet.

In November 2014, the government's strategy, which was formally rolled out across the region, is a "grid management" surveillance system aimed at managing society "without gaps, without blind spots, without blanks," according to the state media.

In August 2015, TAR authorities had called for work teams "to be constantly stationed at their village committee's areas." The TAR government constructed 20,092 new buildings for office or residential use by cadres working in villages and townships. A further 12,008 buildings for these cadres were built by the end of 2016. The total cost of these buildings reached 5.265 billion yuan (US\$810 million) – the largest and most expensive project of its kind in the history of such building construction in the Tibet Autonomous Region, according to official State media channels.

In 2016, China deployed an AnBot police robot equipped with stun weapons and facial recognition cameras to start patrolling the major airports. Stability maintenance policy initiatives are also being implemented in other Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Gansu.

On 1 June 2017, in addition to the village-based surveillance program, China introduced, new cyber security laws (CSL), which violated the right to privacy and enabled the government to identify and persecute those who hold political views deemed sensitive. The legislation passed by China's largely rubber-stamp parliament accelerated the damage to global trade and services. According to the law, it requires companies to store all data within China and it also includes contentious requirements to pass the security review, within China's stated goal to achieve "cyber sovereignty." The idea is that the state should be permitted to govern, monitor, and control data flow in its digital ecosystem.

In 2017, the Machu (Ch: Maqu) County's internet police issued a list of instructions to all online chat group administrators and owners of public online accounts on how to conduct self-censorship. The directive took effect on 8th October and contains rules that are the local version of two new regulations released on 7th September 2017 by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC).

Construction of the Lhasa data center began in 2017 to service investment and trade between Chinese companies and their counterparts in South Asia. It was touted as the world's highest-altitude cloud computing data center.

In July 2017, Apple pulled out 60 VPN services from its AppStore in China. Meanwhile, online services, such as Skype which refused to store their data locally, were thereby delisted from China's domestic app stores.

In 2018, the most notable surveillance mechanisms were mass surveillance cameras on the streets, internet surveillance, and newly invented surveillance methods based on social credit and identity. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) also adopted facial recognition technology including iris scans, surveillance drones, robot police, and big data collection targeting online social media platforms to monitor its citizens.

In 2019, the earliest signs of China's construction of three 5G stations in Tibet were seen in January 2019. To further increase state control over the digital sphere, Chinese authorities in TAR issued a directive in 2019, known as the "20 not-to-dos", which mirrors the repressive provisions. Deeming certain activities as illegal under the directive and the corresponding punitive actions has further caused a spike in self-censorship among Tibetans living in and outside of Tibet.

In 2020, China's fight against COVID-19 was accompanied by an unprecedented level of mass surveillance, with the extensive collection of personal and private information, involving both technological and non-technological components.

The TAR Public Security Department and the TAR Communications Administration, to purportedly prevent and combat "illegal and criminal online content", have prioritized "internet security" in conjunction with the three-year nationwide anti-crime campaign (2018-2020) that has already contributed to the already shrinking space for freedom of expression, thought, and information in Tibet.

In 2021, under the new regulation titled "Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services," released on 20 December 2021, all foreign organizations and individuals were banned from spreading religious content online in China. Article 17 of the new regulation states that

one “must not organize the carrying out of religious activities online, and must not broadcast religious rites such as worshipping Buddha, burning incense, ordinations, services, mass, or baptisms, through means such as text, images, audio, or video either live or in recordings.” The violation of these rules by any organization and individuals was met with swift punitive actions.

On 20 August 2021, the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) passed the Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) (KPMG 2019) which came into effect on 1 November 2021. This Law curbs what information companies can gather and sets the standard for how it must be stored, triggering concerns among foreign business companies and civil societies.

In 2022, mass DNA collection drives appear to have taken place in all seven prefectures or municipalities in the TAR, covering the western part of the Tibetan plateau. The collection drives are part of ongoing efforts by Chinese authorities to establish a pervasive police presence at the grassroots level throughout the region.

Within Buddhist monasteries, Chinese police surveillance units are reportedly working as part of a crackdown on Tibetan Buddhist religious institutions. High-tech surveillance cameras have been installed by police all around the monasteries, enabling officers to monitor the monks around the clock. The monks have also been forced to install a monitoring app on their mobile phones to enable the police to identify contacts and track conversations, making it unsafe for them to communicate which has led to self-censorship.

In 2023, as part of China’s implementation of a cutting-edge technological system for border surveillance, drones are also being extensively put to use. In recent years, in order

to strengthen its military presence there, China has built a network of modern infrastructure in the two autonomous border regions of Tibet and East Turkestan. The country has also begun to make extensive use of unmanned aerial vehicle's (UAV) for a variety of missions, further tightening the Chinese government's grip on Tibet and its neighboring countries.

Current Status and Policy

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), despite its economic rise, continues to be an authoritarian party-state resolute in asserting its complete dominance to curb freedom of expression, the right to information and religion.

President Xi has recently put “common prosperity” at the forefront of its economic development goals, which have seen major crackdowns on businesses. China says the policy is aimed at narrowing the widening wealth gap, which could threaten the Communist Party's rule if left unaddressed. Technology, education, and entertainment firms have been severely hit by the crackdowns.

Renowned tuition centers, including “Dolmey Lobso” in Tibet, were shut down under the directive of this law. The Chinese government has long scrutinized Tibetans for evidence of disloyalty to the regime. Such decisions would severely restrict freedom of speech, and people would live in constant fear of being detained. Many Tibetans have been charged for alleged involvement in “subversion of state law and leaking information to the outside world, which is considered a “state security crime.”

The CCP censors the internet and maintains intensive surveillance apparatus in the form of facial recognition technology and Global Positioning System (GPS) coordination in its occupied territories, including Tibet, East Turkistan (Ch:

Xinjiang), and Southern Mongolia (Inner Mongolia). Due to China's state-sponsored media's regular dissemination of one-sided narratives on incidents that may tarnish the CCP's image, Chinese leadership in the past and present perceives electronic and print media to be the mouthpiece of the party to be used aggressively for propaganda.

Companies facilitating digital surveillance in Tibet include Alibaba, search engine Baidu, Chat app operator Tencent Holdings, voice recognition company iFlyTek, and facial recognition system Sense Time. State subsidies have a free hand to use Tibet as an open laboratory, making it an enticing site for these businesses to invest and perfect their latest surveillance technologies. Companies operating in Tibet enjoy a highly reduced tax rate of 9% compared to the standard corporate tax rate of 25% for the rest of China.

The recent mass DNA collection drive occurring in Tibet, where Human Rights Watch identified collection drives in 14 distinct localities across 7 prefectural-level areas, indicates the intensity of the project under the current regime. Despite a shift in Beijing's system of exerting control over Tibet, for Tibetans, it is crystal clear that if you have family and links in Tibet you must be apolitical even if you are personally outside the direct clutches of Beijing's authoritarian rule. Their family inside Tibet would be questioned, threatened, and even sentenced due to their actions. It is quite clear that the ultimate goal of the mass DNA collection drive, conducted without the consent of Tibetans, is to keep them under constant surveillance. DNA information is highly sensitive and can facilitate a wide array of abuses if collected or shared non-consensually. Coercing people to give blood samples, or taking blood samples without informed consent or justification can violate an individual's privacy and dignity it can also constitute forms of degrading treatment.

Analysis

The increased use of surveillance will have far-reaching implications in China. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has invested billions of dollars in the upkeep and improvement of its surveillance grid, the world's most sophisticated digital system of social control. The intensity of this mass surveillance system is far more intrusive in regions such as Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia, as compared to the rest of China.

The bamboo curtain around Tibet has been shut for a long time and Tibet is off-limit for free and independent visits from international media, journalists, advocates, researchers, government, and civil society representatives. The highly repressive situation inside Tibet makes it difficult to accurately comprehend the scale and intensity of digital surveillance. In recent years, the CCP has faced criticism from outside and within its borders for its pervasive use of surveillance technologies, yet the current regime continues to persevere in its current objectives.

China's sophisticated surveillance competence is being employed to target and accrue personal information to gain leverage on important actors and to gather Big Data – the use of which is essentially unlimited. Beijing's stupendous growth and deployment of data-gathering systems and surveillance tools globally have been accompanied by little to no transparency or accountability.

Such measures have put at risk the safety and security of dissidents and activists all over the world and strengthened rogue and undemocratic regimes. Recent developments such as its DNA collection drives indicate that China is moving onto what can be described as “biosecurity state” – the next phase of misappropriating data to further repress and control Tibet and its other regions.

CHINA'S 60 YEARS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DESTRUCTION IN TIBET*

The Tibetan Plateau, with an area spread over 2.5 million square kilometers, was perceived as 'one great zoological garden' by early explorers to the region, such as Francis Kingdon Ward, a British botanist and explorer who conducted several surveys in Tibet before the First World War. The cultural way of life in Tibet, which was greatly influenced by both Bon and Buddhist traditions, strictly forbade the general public from commercial hunting. Successive rulers in Tibet issued strict edicts to ban hunting at several ecological sites during various periods of its history.

Prior to the Chinese occupation in the 1950s, there were numerous accounts of seeing large herds of wild animals by early western explorers, Tibetan merchants, and pilgrims travelling through the vast northern grasslands of Tibet. Captain C. G. Rawling wrote (Rawling, 1905) that he saw herds of thousands upon thousands of Tibetan antelope with their young as far as his eyes could reach, possibly not less than 15,000-20,000 visible at one time. Leonard Clark, an American adventurer in the forties, reported that he spotted a bear, a wolf, a herd of musk deer, Kiang (wild ass), gazelles, big horn sheep, or foxes. Describing the sighting as 'one of the last unspoiled big game paradises' (Clark, 1954).

Environmental conservation efforts were carried out on a large scale as early as during the pre-imperial period (7th to 9th Centuries) in the Shangshung region, where the Bon belief in the presence of deities in the mountains and lakes came into practice. The conservation efforts were further strengthened by Songtsen Gampo, the 33rd emperor of the Tibetan empire, in the 7th century. The emperor issued edicts forbidding his subjects from harming and killing animals. The founder of the

* Adapted from *Tibetan perspectives on Tibet's environment*, Published by Tibet Policy Institute

Phagmodrupa Dynasty in Tibet, Tai Situ Changchub Gyaltzen (1302-1364), enforced an ingenious policy of planting 200,000 trees annually and appointed a forest officer to protect the

newly planted trees. Similarly, successive rulers in Tibet, like the 5th Dalai Lama and the 13th Dalai Lama, issued strict prohibitions on hunting and the felling of trees at important ecological sites.

But, as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) marched into Tibet from three separate Sino-Tibet border fronts in the 1950s, Tibet began to witness unprecedented environmental destruction across the plateau and a sudden disruption in its age-old tradition of causing minimum harm to the natural environment and its wildlife inhabitants. This particular section will focus on five environmental issues in Tibet in order to give a quick glimpse into 60 years of China's environmental destruction in Tibet.

Reality in Tibet and China's Lack of Understanding

China's White Paper, 'Democratic Reform in Tibet: Sixty Years On' (The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, 2019), was released on March 27, 2019 to mark the 60th year of Chinese occupation of the Tibetan plateau and suppression of the Tibetan people.

A brief chapter on Tibet's ecology in the Chinese White Paper on Tibet once again highlights Beijing's absolute lack of understanding of Tibet's history and its unwillingness to go beyond official government documents that remain dubious and manipulative of ground reality. With a blatant display of colonial arrogance, the paper states: "In old Tibet, with an extremely underdeveloped economy, people could only adapt to the natural environment—they used whatever they could to exploit nature." Such a narrative outright undermines Tibet's glorious history and overlooks the Tibetan people's

environmental conservation efforts for thousands of years. In reality, it was the Tibetan people's belief in the sacredness of their natural environment coupled with their profound wisdom and skill to co-exist harmoniously with their surrounding environment that helped in the conservation of the world's highest plateau until the Chinese occupation in the 1950s. Historically, Tibetans have not only protected and respected their environment but also successfully adapted to the ever-changing climatic conditions of the plateau, thus enabling them to prosper on the world's highest plateau as a successful civilization, powerful empire, and complex society.

Numerous scientific studies in recent years have affirmed the positive role of Tibetan people's cultural beliefs (Danica M. Anderson, 2005) in preserving the sacredness of important ecological sites (Jan Salick, 2007), as the environment was for the most part left undisturbed. Persistent efforts were made to further strengthen the culture of environmental protection by the then local and national rulers. Religious leaders and institutions played a major role in propagating the importance of ecological well-being for a healthy and prosperous community.

China's Invasion and the Sudden Decrease in Tibet's Wildlife

Many elderly Tibetans, who fled Tibet during the 1950s invasion, saw herds of wild animals slaughtered by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as the Chinese soldiers rained bullets on the animals from their machine guns. Such a large-scale hunting practice of wild animals was utterly alien to the people of Tibet. Unfortunately, PLA soldiers stationed in Tibet, in order to sustain themselves on the Tibetan plateau, continued to engage in similar large-scale mass hunting. According to eyewitness accounts, despite strong objections from local Tibetan communities, some Chinese officials used dynamite in rivers and lakes to instantly kill hundreds of fish.

Such practises deeply hurt the Buddhist sentiments of the Tibetans and drastically polluted local drinking water. Chinese government authorities in Tibet issued in 2006 and 2011 licences for the commercial hunting of rare animals (Si, 2011), and many officials engaged in hunting for leisure. Such a government attitude encouraged large-scale illegal poaching across Tibet in the 1980s and early 1990s. Some emboldened poachers even killed Sonam Dhargye in 1994, a prominent wildlife conservationist, seeding fear and anger among the local community (Kyap, 2011).

In a brazen case of hypocrisy and insincerity, the Chinese government opposed His Holiness the Dalai Lama's call for Tibetans to abandon the tradition of wearing animal skins and fur-decorated dresses in 2006. The increasing popularity of the dress is said to have led to a huge trafficking of animal skin products into Tibet from the Indian Subcontinent. Like many Tibetan scholars who have long opposed this practice, some environmentalists in India, such as Belinda Wright, the Executive Director of the Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), also voiced concern over this issue (Wildlife Protection Society of India, 2005). Fortunately, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's call, which was made during the Kalachakra in Amravati in 2006, received an instant mass reaction from Tibet despite the immense popularity of the dress in the region. Tibetans en masse burned their expensive dresses (Spencer, 2006) and vowed to end the tradition of wearing dresses decorated with animal skins and furs. The popular movement was considered to be one of the greatest contributions to wildlife protection in Tibet after the Chinese occupation. But the Chinese government, on the contrary, encouraged and enforced government officials (Gaphel, 2015) and the local community to continue with the practice of wearing animal fur-decorated dresses, especially at public functions and government meetings, punishing those who refused to follow the order.

China's State-Logging Enterprises and Excessive Deforestation in Tibet

Until 1949, Tibet's forest cover, predominantly found in eastern Amdo, southeastern Kham, and the Kongpo region of southern Tibet, was one of the oldest reserves in all of Central Asia. Some scientists have compared the Tibetan Plateau's known biodiversity to that of the Amazon Rainforest (Environment & Development, 2000, pp. 1–18). But the invasion of Tibet opened up the region to ambitious Chinese state-logging enterprises. China has been one of the largest consumers of timber in the world, and it has inflicted an unprecedented scale of deforestation across the region. Tibet's forest cover was reduced to 13.57 million hectares from 25.2 million hectares, a reduction of about 46% between 1950 and 1985 (Environment & Development Desk, 1992). The alarming scale of logging in many parts of the southeastern and north-eastern parts of Tibet was one of the factors that led to the 1998 Yangtze flood and the 2010 Drukchu flood (Zong Yongqiang, 2000).

1998 Yangtze Flood: The 1998 Yangtze flood in China was one of the worst floods in 44 years at the time. According to China's official estimate, the flood killed more than 3,000 people, displaced 15 million, and affected 223 million—almost one-fifth of China's population at the time (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 1998). A post-disaster study by Chinese scientists identified excessive logging in the Yangtze Valley, particularly in the Tibetan areas, as one of the primary causes of the massive flood.

According to a report published by the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team in 1998, the cause of the disaster is excessive rainfall, which, according to Chinese meteorologists, was ascribed to the worldwide El Niño phenomenon followed by La Niña; the melting of lasting and deep snow accumulated in the Qinghai-Tibet plateau in

the south-west of China; a weak Asian monsoon; unusual sub-tropical high pressure systems on the West Pacific Ocean; and a decrease in the number of typhoons. According to Chinese government officials, the disaster was also due, in part, to rampant deforestation, which caused serious soil erosion and, in turn, silting (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 1998).

Some 70 state-owned logging enterprises have cut a total of 120 million cubic metres of wood from the forest of eastern Kham and generated over 2 billion yuan (US \$241 million) in taxes and profits between 1949 and 1998 (Environment & Development Desk, 2000, pp. 53-57). The extensive and unsustainable industrial logging continued until the disastrous 1998 Yangtze flood, but large-scale deforestation still continues in many parts of Kongpo. This might have led to some of the recent floods and landslides in the region in recent years (2014, 2016, and 2018). Tree logging was a major source of employment in Tibet. For instance, in the Kongpo region alone, over 20,000 Chinese soldiers and Tibetan prisoners were involved in tree felling and transportation (Environment & Development Desk, DIIR, 1992, pp. 47-50). The scale of logging in Tibet was also highlighted by ICIMOD in their latest report, 'The Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment' (Philippus Wester, 2019). The report states that the warm-temperate coniferous forest has nearly disappeared from the south-east Tibetan Plateau, mostly due to commercial logging before the end of the 1990s. The consumption of timber in China increased by nearly 18% to 192.5 million cubic metres between 2013 and 2017, as per a report by Market Watch (Market Watch, 2019).

Drukchu Flood in 2010: On August 8, 2010, landslides and mud-rock flows brought about by heavy rains occurred in the Drukchu area of Amdo in north-eastern Tibet. As per Chinese

official reports (China.org, 2010), the mud-rock flow levelled a region spanning 5 km in length, 300 metres in width, and 5 metres in depth in the county seat, with more than 2 million cubic metres of mud and rocks flowing down the valley. This severely damaged the power, telecommunications, and water supplies in the region. The mudslides destroyed more than 300 homes and damaged another 700 (China Daily, 2010).

Local residents have blamed the regional Chinese government for excessive logging in the valley as the primary cause of the massive flood. The forest was being cleared to build 156 hydropower stations along the river valley as part of a new policy issued in 2005 to exploit the Drukchu River (Environment & Development Desk, 2016). Similar conclusions were also echoed in a paper published by the Journal of Geophysical Research (Diancong, 2014). The paper stated that the massive Drukchu landslide of August 2010 was caused by extreme precipitation, magnified by the Wenchuan earthquake of May 2008 and the severe loss of vegetation cover in the Drukchu region.

Sudden Disruption of the Nomadic Lifestyle

Tibet's rangeland covers approximately 70 percent of its total area. The alpine grassland at high altitude, in turn, covers 60 percent of the total Tibetan rangeland. Pastoralism on the Tibetan Plateau involves adaptation to a cold environment at elevations not suitable for cultivation. According to archaeological fieldwork, pastoral nomads have developed a deep understanding of grassland dynamics and veterinary knowledge while maintaining a unique pastoral culture for more than 8,000 years (Miller, 2008). However, according to a report by Human Rights Watch in 2013, more than 2 million people, mostly nomads, were forcibly removed from their traditional grassland habitat between 1995 and 2015 and fenced into poorly planned re-settlement villages. The Chinese government blamed pastoral nomads for grassland

degradation and desertification in the north-eastern regions of Tibet. With the sudden disruption of their age-old, self-reliant nomadic way of life, the nomads were left completely destitute.

The Chinese government's policy of erecting fences to bar nomads from entering their pasture areas has led to further degradation of the grasslands. The Chinese government's motive all along has been to seize land and use it for their own exploitation. With the rate at which China is tampering with the fertile grasslands for mining, the consequential harm being caused to the ecosystem is immense.

The Chinese claim that they are engineering social wellbeing and economic development for the nomads by creating new resettlement villages is contrary to the reality faced by the resettled nomads (Gongbo Tashi, 2012). Resettled nomads have no access to medical, educational, or business opportunities to support themselves. Looking back at Tibetan history, nomads were integral to the upkeep of Tibetan grasslands; they had a prospering, co-dependent relationship with the ecosystem.

The lack of jobs and educational opportunities in the resettled areas has pushed the nomadic population into the margins of society where they are compelled into alcoholism and their children engage in petty crimes (Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 2015).

Mega-dams on Tibetan Rivers and Increasing Risks

The claim in the Chinese White Paper (2019) that 'currently all the major rivers and lakes in Tibet remain in their natural state' stands in stark contrast to the reality on the ground. According to 'The Last Report', on all major Tibetan rivers, the Chinese government has either constructed, is actively constructing, or has proposed plans to construct cascades of dams (Li Bo,

2014). Mega-dams are being built in Tibetan areas to power Chinese cities and accelerate large-scale resource extraction across Tibet. Damming rivers has huge consequences for the ecosystem, people, and nations downstream. Mega-dams have great capacity to harm the environment and the ecosystems that support life on the Tibetan Plateau. Dams interrupt the flow of silt and the migration and breeding of fish, as well as kill plants and trees, cause floods and landslides, and reduce biodiversity.

There have been cases of reservoir-induced seismic (RIS) activities caused by dams in China. According to a Probe International Report authored by Fan Xiao, a Chinese geologist, the 2008 Wenchun earthquake and the 2014 Ludian earthquake were induced by two nearby dams, the Zipinpu Dam and the Xiluadu Dam. The report states (Xiao, 2012): The epicentre of the Wenchuan earthquake, which is estimated to have killed more than 85,000 people and left 5 million without homes, was mere 3.5 miles away from the Zipingpu Dam. The dam, a 510-foot-high wall with a reservoir holding 315 million tonnes of water, was built on top of a major seismic fault zone. The weight of the reservoir could have produced the earthquake or exasperated a smaller earthquake.

However, Chinese officials refuted the probability of the two occurring together. Unfortunately, dams being constructed in the Tibetan areas are located in moderate to very high seismic hazard zones, as the Tibetan Plateau is highly prone to seismic activity (Deng Qi-Dong, 2014). Despite making amendments to strengthen China's Environmental Impact Assessment Law¹ in 2003, dams are being built rapidly without proper environmental impact assessment (EIA) and consultation with the local community. For instance, the construction of the Lianghekous dam, on the Yalong River in the Nyakchu area of southeastern Tibet will lead to the displacement of about 6,000 Tibetans in the area. According to reports, the massive

project, said to become the third tallest dam in the world once completed in 2023, will submerge ancestral homes, Buddhist monasteries, fertile crops, and sacred mountains as far as 100 kilometres upstream from the dam site (France-Presse, 2017).

River Water Pollution from Toxic Mine Waste

Some of China's greatest cultures, histories, and economies flourished on the banks of the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers, which originate from the melting glaciers and permafrost of Tibet and continue to feed millions in China as they flow parallel to each other across almost all of China's provinces. It's clear that the ecological health of the Tibetan Plateau is vital for the stable social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of China. But as per a Chinese official report, over 40 percent of China's rivers are seriously polluted, and about 20 percent of rivers are so excessively polluted that their water quality has been rated too toxic to even come into contact with (Jian, 2012). Three-quarters of its lakes and reservoirs are unsuitable for human consumption and fishing (China Water Risk, 2010).

Systematic and large-scale mining in Tibet began in the 1960s with the expansion of the Chinese presence in Tibet. China began surveying for mineral deposits in Tibet at the very onset of its occupation. Most of China's infrastructure development in Tibet is aimed at speeding up large-scale resource extraction. The destructive and unethical methods of China's mining practices have led to protests and disharmony across Tibet. Since 2009, there have been more than 30 known large-scale public protests against mining in Tibet as Chinese mining companies continue to destroy grassland and pollute rivers.

Minyak Lhagang Water Pollution

A lithium mining company called Ronda Lithium Co. Ltd. released toxic mine waste into a local river called Lichu

in Minyak Lhagang in eastern Tibet, causing serious water pollution and the mass death of fish (Palden, 2016). This brought hundreds of local Tibetans out on the street on May 4, 2016 in protest against the mining company (Denyer, 2016). The local government informed the protestors that it had temporarily halted the mining activities, but local Tibetans soon realized that the government had lied to them as operations continued at the mining site. This was not the first or an isolated case of river water pollution (Voice of America, 2016). The same river had been polluted with lithium mine waste back in 2013, causing the deaths of aquatic animals and threatening local drinking water.

Dolkar Village Water Pollution

In a similar case on 23 September 2014, in Dolkar and Zibuk villages of Lhundrup County near Lhasa, more than 1,000 local Tibetans protested against the poisoning of their river by the Gyama Copper Polymetallic Mine (Radio Free Asia, 2014). The mine is located close to a river that locals use for drinking water, irrigation, and feeding animals. Predictably, local officials declared that the water pollution in the river was caused by natural factors and not by the mining company. But according to an article published in 2010 by Xiang, a Chinese scientist firmly stated that many mining and processing sites in the valley pose a great environmental concern as the deposits contain large amounts of heavy metals, such as lead, copper, zinc, and manganese, etc. The article further stated that the deposits are prone to leak contaminants through seepage water and erosion of particulates, posing a future risk to the local environment and downstream water quality (Xiang Huang, 2010).

A local resident of the village told Radio Free Asia in September 2014 that, “In the past, our rivers were crisp and clean, and the mountains and valleys were known for their natural beauty”. But “now the rivers are polluted with poisonous

waste from the mines” (Radio Free Asia, 2014). This is a clear indication of the scale of environmental damage caused by mining activities across Tibet.

China Earning Billions from Mining in Tibet

China claims that they have spent millions on environmental conservation projects in recent years, but they have earned billions more from mining and other resource extraction activities in Tibet. According to China Gold International's 2018-2019 Year-End Report (China Gold International Resource Corp., 2019), the copper production from the Jiama (Gyama) Mine increased from 35,844 tonnes (approximately 79.0 million pounds) to 55,025 tonnes (approximately 121.3 million pounds), exhibiting an increase of about 54% in production from 2017 to 2018. Gold production increased to 70,262 ounces, compared to 47,710 ounces in the same period. The report also stated that revenue increased by 22% to US\$163.0 million from US\$133.3 million.

The Chinese Geological Survey estimated in 2007 that the Tibetan Plateau holds about 30–40 million tonnes of copper reserves, 40 million tonnes of zinc, and several billion tonnes of iron (China Daily, 2007). The proven reserve of more than 7.8 million tonnes of copper at the Yulong Copper Mine makes it the largest in China and the second largest in Asia.

Conclusion

The primary goal of China's development projects in Tibet, as shown during its 60 years of occupation, is to facilitate resource extraction, mass migration, and China's economic development. The Chinese government has been heavily investing in the Nyingtri Prefecture in southern Tibet, resulting in massive construction activities along the Yarlung Tsangpo/Brahmaputra River valley. Even though China claims to be opening up the isolated region to development, the real

motive behind the billion-dollar investment is to facilitate the eventual mass migration of Chinese into the Nyingtri region of Tibet. Nyingtri, a sparsely populated and resource-rich region that enjoys a temperate climate with immense forest cover, could be seen as an ideal place for Chinese migrants, possibly leading to both the destruction of its natural environment and further marginalization of the local Tibetan population.

While the Chinese state-owned companies continue to make billions from mining, damming, logging, and tourism activities across Tibet, the scale of environmental destruction on the Tibetan plateau in the past 60 years has been unprecedented in its long history.

Endnotes

1. Adopted at the 30th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress on October 28, 2002, promulgated by Order No. 77 of the President of the People's Republic of China on October 28, 2002, and effective on September 1, 2003.



MIDDLE WAY POLICY: SEEKING GENUINE AUTONOMY FOR THE TIBETAN PEOPLE

Introduction

The Middle Way Approach for Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People (Umaylam in Tibetan) is a policy conceived by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and adopted as the official policy of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). The middle-way policy aims to seek genuine autonomy through dialogue so as to protect the unique culture and identity of Tibetan people. It is also grounded in the Buddhist principle of avoiding extremes and instead finding a middle ground. This policy is a win-win proposition and a pragmatic solution that safeguards the vital interests of both parties. For Tibetans, it offers the protection and preservation of their identity and dignity; for China, it maintains the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

After taking into consideration the prevailing political situation of the world in general and China in particular, His Holiness the Dalai Lama held a series of discussions with the members of the Kashag (Cabinet) and the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies¹ (now known as the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile). Following these discussions, an internal decision was taken in 1974 to pursue a middle-way policy to secure meaningful autonomy for Tibet and to engage the PRC government through dialogue. In an opinion poll held in 1997 among the Tibetans in exile, 64 percent of the respondents expressed support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision of the Middle Way Approach. Reflecting this outcome, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile adopted a unanimous resolution to support the approach on September 18, 1997. In the following decades, CTA has repeatedly reaffirmed the Tibetan people's adherence to the middle-way policy that seeks genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people and engagement with the Chinese leadership for the benefit of both Chinese

and Tibetan people.

The policy's first accomplishment was the establishment of direct contact between Dharamshala and Beijing. Deng Xiaoping said in 1979 that "apart from independence, all issues can be discussed." Four fact-finding Tibetan delegations from exile visited Tibet from 1979–1985. Two high-level exploratory delegations from Dharamshala met with senior Chinese leadership in Beijing in 1982 and 1984, and official contact between Dharamshala and Beijing was maintained until August 1993. Meanwhile, since 1987, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has presented the Middle Way Approach in a range of forums around the world, including the U.S. Congress² and the European Parliament³.

The Sino-Tibet Dialogue resumed in 2002, and nine rounds of talks were held until 2010. During the 7th round of talks in 2008, the year in which unprecedented and widespread protests broke out across Tibet, the PRC government asked the Tibetan leadership to put in writing the nature of the autonomy it sought. Thus, the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People⁴ was presented during the 8th round of talks in 2008.

The PRC government expressed a number of concerns and objections to the Memorandum. To address the concerns and objections raised by the PRC government on the Memorandum, the Tibetan leadership presented the Note on Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People⁵ during the 9th and last round of talks in January 2010.

These two documents, the Memorandum and the Note, elaborate on how genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people, as proposed by Tibetans, would operate within the framework of the Constitution of the PRC. These also take into consideration the sovereignty, territorial integrity, the three adherences⁶

and the authority of the PRC government. The Note further addresses the specific concerns raised by the PRC government with respect to the form of single administration, political, social, and economic systems, public security, regulation of population migration, language, and religion. There has been no dialogue with the PRC government since 2010.

Tibetan Aspiration

In 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) forcibly invaded Tibet. Since then, Tibet has endured the darkest period in its history. More than 1.2 million Tibetans have perished, and over 6,000 monasteries were reduced to ruins due to the occupation. The PRC government has since imposed systematic repressive policies, resulting in political oppression, cultural assimilation, economic marginalization, and environmental degradation in Tibet. This has threatened the very existence of a distinct Tibetan national identity, including its language, culture, religion, environment, and livelihood. The gross violation of fundamental human rights in Tibet continues to this day.

All Tibetans, within and outside Tibet, earnestly aspire for freedom and ultimately yearn for the peaceful resolution of the longstanding Sino-Tibet conflict. Over the last six decades, Tibetan people from all three traditional regions of Tibet—U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo—have continuously engaged in peaceful resistance against the PRC's coercive policies that undermine Tibetan identity and their fundamental rights. These expressions of discontent were invariably suppressed by the use of disproportionate force. The reprisals against the Tibetan people by the PRC government have resulted in the deaths of Tibetans, arbitrary detention, and torture in prisons.

China has since implemented sophisticated surveillance methods that have turned Tibet into a giant open prison. Even after decades of the PRC's rule over Tibet, since 2009,

there have been 157 known cases of Tibetans who have self-immolated against China's repressive policies in Tibet. They have called for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and the restoration of freedom for the Tibetan people.

CTA remains resolute in its commitment to seek a mutually beneficial and lasting solution to resolve the Sino-Tibet conflict through dialogue between the representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and representatives of the PRC leadership based on the Middle Way Policy. It calls on the PRC government to grant genuine autonomy to the Tibetan people within the framework of the PRC Constitution. This approach accommodates the key concerns of both the Tibetan people and the PRC government.

Position of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

In 2011, His Holiness the Dalai Lama devolved his political authority to the democratically elected Tibetan political leader Kalon Tripa⁷ (now known as the Sikyong) of the Central Tibetan Administration. As stated in the Memorandum, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has made it clear on numerous occasions that he will not hold any political position in Tibet. As a symbol of Tibetan unity and identity, His Holiness is a beacon of hope for the Tibetan people. The Tibetan people place their hope in his spiritual leadership as the person most trusted to bring about a peaceful resolution to the situation inside Tibet. To this day, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remains steadfast and committed in his endorsement of the Middle-Way policy as a realistic and pragmatic solution to peacefully resolve the Sino-Tibet conflict through dialogue.

What are Tibetan People Seeking through the Middle Way Policy?

The Middle Way Policy seeks genuine autonomy for Tibetan people who share a common language, religion, and customs

without challenging the sovereignty and integrity of the PRC. Uniting them under a single administrative unit would be a more efficient and effective form of governance than the existing structure where Tibetans are divided into the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Qinghai, and three Chinese provinces i.e., Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan.

The Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People calls for 11 basic needs for self-governance for the Tibetan people. This encompasses the following:

Language, Culture, Religion, Education, Environmental protection, Utilisation of natural resources, Economic development and trade, Public health, Public security, Regulation on population migration, Cultural, educational and religious exchanges with other countries.

These demands are within the framework of both the Law on National Regional Autonomy and the Constitution of the PRC.

The PRC authorities claimed that it is the Tibetan leadership's intention to expel "all Chinese" from Tibetan areas. In fact, the Memorandum clearly articulates that this is not the case: "Our intention is not to expel non-Tibetans. Our concern is the induced mass movement of primarily Han, but also some other nationalities, into many Tibetan areas, which in turn marginalises the native Tibetan population." The Memorandum calls for the Tibetan areas to have a Tibetan majority for the preservation and promotion of the unique Tibetan identity.

Evolution of the Middle Way Policy

Conceived initially by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Middle Way Approach was gradually adopted as the official policy of the Central Tibetan Administration to find a solution to the Sino-Tibet conflict. This adoption of the official policy came

about through a democratic process. Between 1988 and 2010, a series of meetings and an opinion poll were held to solicit the views of the Tibetans inside and in exile.

In 1987, His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced his long-term vision for Tibet, called the Five-Point Peace Plan, at the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus. In 1988, while elaborating on the fifth point of the Five-Point Peace Plan, His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced the Strasbourg Proposal at the European Parliament. Since this was the first proposal explaining the Middle Way Approach, a four-day special political meeting of the Tibetan leadership was organized in advance in Dharamshala before making it public. They held a thorough discussion on the text of the proposal and finally endorsed it unanimously.

During an opinion poll conducted in 1995–1997, 64% of the total opinions received expressed that there was no need to hold a referendum and that they would support the Middle Way Policy or whatever decision His Holiness the Dalai Lama took from time to time in accordance with the changing political situation in the world. Reflecting on the outcome of the opinion poll, the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies adopted a unanimous resolution in favour of the Middle Way Policy on September 18, 1997.

Similarly, more than 80% of the opinions collected during the six-day first special general meeting held in November 2008 also reiterated support for the Middle Way Policy. Finally, in March 2010, a parliamentary resolution in support of the policy was unanimously adopted again. Thus, the Middle Way Policy received the support of an overwhelming majority of Tibetans.

International Support for Middle Way Policy

The Tibetan leadership believes that the Middle Way Policy is the most viable solution to resolve the Sino-Tibet conflict. It is also the approach that has enjoyed the strongest international support. Many governments internationally have officially stated their support for dialogue between the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the PRC leadership, including the US, EU, Britain, France, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. Over the years, many international resolutions, motions, and statements in support of dialogue have been passed in many parliaments across the world. Most recently, on December 14, 2022, Canada's Parliament unanimously passed a motion endorsing Tibet's Middle Way Policy and their support for the resumption of dialogue.

The Middle Way Policy has received much support from the Chinese community. Some of the most respected Chinese intellectuals and artists have endorsed the policy. These include the late Liu Xiaobo, the Nobel Peace Laureate, who was one of the co-authors of an open letter in 2008 that expressed support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's peace initiatives. Since then, more than 1,000 articles and opinion pieces have been written by Chinese scholars and writers supporting dialogue to resolve the issue of Tibet. A report by the Beijing-based legal organisation (the Gongmeng Law Research Centre of the Open Constitution Initiative)⁸, describes the grievances of the Tibetan people and calls for policy review. In 2012, 82 Chinese NGOs based in 15 countries sent a petition to the United Nations, the EU, and various parliaments and governments, exhorting them to "urge the PRC government to start negotiations as soon as possible." Other Chinese intellectuals who support the Middle Way Policy include Wang Lixiong, a well-known writer; Zhang Boshu of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a constitutional expert; Ran Yunfei of Sichuan Literary

Periodical; Yu Haocheng, a senior member of the Communist Party and legal expert based in Beijing; Su Shaozhi, a former economist at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; and Yan Jiaqi, a close aide of Zhao Ziyang, the former premier of China.

Global leaders who have called for dialogue based on the Middle Way Policy include former US Presidents (Barack Obama, George W. Bush, William J. Clinton); former High Commissioner for UN Human Rights Navi Pillay; former High Representative for EU on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of European Commission Lady Catherine Ashton; former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown; former French President Nicolas Sarkozy; former German Chancellor Angela Merkel; former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper; former Australian Prime Ministers Tony Abbot and Kevin Rudd; former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou; and former Prime Minister of Japan, the late Shinzo Abe.

After President Barack Obama's meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on July 16, 2011 and again on February 21, 2014, the White House applauded "the Dalai Lama's commitment to non-violence and dialogue with China and his pursuit of the Middle Way Policy" and encouraged "direct dialogue to resolve long-standing differences", saying "that a dialogue that produces results would be positive for China and Tibetans."

The Middle Way Policy has been supported by many Nobel laureates. In 2008, 26 Nobel laureates including the late Alexei Abrikosov, Peter Agre, late Baruj Benacerraf, late Gunter Blobel, late Arvid Carlsson, John Coetzee, late Paul J. Crutzen, late Clive W.J. Granger, late Paul Greengard, Avram Hershko, Roald Hoffman, late John Hume, Brian D. Josephson, Eric R. Kandel, Roger Kornberg, Finn E. Kydland, Erwin Neher, John C. Polanyi, Richard J. Roberts, Phillip A. Sharp, late Jens C. Skou, Wole Soyinka, late Elie Wiesel,

Torsten N. Wiesel, late Betty Williams, and H. David Politzer called upon the PRC government to resume talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives as soon as possible in order to achieve a peaceful and mutually beneficial solution to the Sino-Tibet conflict.

In an open letter to Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2012, twelve Nobel laureates, including the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, Jody Williams of the US, Jos  Ramos Horta of East Timor, and the late Betty Williams of the UK, wrote, "The people of Tibet wish to be heard. They have long sought meaningful autonomy and chosen negotiation and friendly help as their means of attaining it. The PRC government should hear their voices, understand their grievances, and find a non-violent solution. That solution is offered by our friend and brother, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who has never sought separatism and has always chosen a peaceful path. We strongly urge the PRC government to seize the opportunity it provides for a meaningful dialogue. Once formed, this channel should remain open, active, and productive. It should address issues that are at the heart of the current tension, respecting the dignity of the Tibetan people and the integrity of China."

Prominent leaders inside Tibet who have supported the Middle Way Policy include the late Panchen Lama, who openly expressed support for the policy. The late Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, a former minister of the Tibetan government in Tibet, urged the PRC government to implement regional autonomy in Tibet as promised in its 17-Point Agreement.⁹

The late Baba Phuntsok Wangyal, a senior Tibetan official of the Chinese Communist Party, stated that "the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Policy of seeking only meaningful autonomy for Tibet rather than independence, in the present historical context, is an expression of the great responsibility he takes in giving serious thoughts over the fundamental interests,

future, and fate of Tibet and the Tibetans as a whole. It also shows that he takes great responsibility for understanding the issues concerning both sides and carefully studying the changing circumstances. Furthermore, it is a way of thinking that is based on reality and foresight.”

Tibetan leaders such as Dorjee Tseten, a senior Tibetan Communist leader and former director of the Tibetology Research Centre in Beijing; Sangye Yeshe, a veteran Tibetan Communist leader; Tashi Tsering, a professor of English at Tibet University in Lhasa; and Yangling Dorjee, a senior Tibetan Communist leader, support the unification of all the Tibetan people under a single administration.

The Way Forward

The Central Tibetan Administration hopes to find a mutually agreeable solution to Tibet’s future status through dialogue based on the Middle Way Policy. It is the only viable solution to resolving the Sino-Tibet conflict. In an effort to resolve the Sino-Tibet conflict in a manner that benefits both parties concerned, we are ready to engage in discussion to seek a lasting solution based on equality, friendship, and mutual benefit. Until the Sino-Tibet conflict is resolved, the CTA will make every effort to bring global attention to the ongoing PRC government’s repression and extermination of Tibetan identity. CTA will continue to seek international support to defend the Tibetan cause and to encourage the PRC government to resume peaceful dialogue on negotiations to resolve the long-standing Sino-Tibet conflict.

The Middle Way Policy: A Chronology

This timeline does not attempt to be exhaustive but rather gives key points in the evolution of the history of the Middle Way Policy.

1949 The People's Liberation Army of the People's Republic of China (PRC) invades and starts to assume control over Tibet.

1951-1959 In 1951, the PRC government coerced the Tibetan representatives to sign the "17-Point Agreement on Measures for Peaceful Liberation of Tibet". The PRC government violates the provisions of the agreement and fails to abide by them.

1959 With resistance taking place in various parts of Tibet in the late 1950s, the National Uprising also broke out in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, in March 1959. PRC forces crushed the uprising, leading to the deaths of 87,000 Tibetans between March 1959 and September 1960. Escaping the PRC's repression in Tibet, approximately 80,000 Tibetans followed His Holiness the Dalai Lama across the Himalayas and into exile in India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

1959-1974 Due to the humanitarian support of the Government of India, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has a base in exile in northern India. On April 18, 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama repudiates the "17-Point Agreement" on reaching Tezpur in Assam and first settles in Mussoorie and then later in Dharamshala, where the Central Tibetan Administration is established. With the support and guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the CTA, Tibetans in exile concentrated on establishing themselves in communities around the world. During this period, the UN General Assembly adopted three resolutions on the issue of Tibet: in 1959, 1961, and 1965.

1974 Taking into consideration the gravity of the situation inside Tibet and the need to alleviate the suffering

of Tibetans, His Holiness the Dalai Lama envisions a win-win proposition to solve the issue of Tibet that would also address China's fundamental concern about maintaining sovereignty and territorial integrity. His Holiness held a series of discussions with the Kashag (Cabinet), leaders of the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies (CTPD), and trusted friends of Tibet. An internal decision is taken to pursue a policy of autonomy—the "Middle Way"—rather than separation from the PRC. This policy came to be known as the Middle Way Approach (Umaylam in Tibetan).

1979 China's paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, stated that "apart from independence, all issues can be discussed" and offered talks with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Since the Middle Way Approach has already been developed, a positive response is sent to Deng Xiaoping, beginning a long period of contact and discussions between Dharamshala and Beijing.

1979-1985 China accepted four fact-finding delegations to Tibet in August 1979, May 1980, June 1980, and June 1985. The delegations are enthusiastically received by local Tibetans. They visit various parts of Tibet, including Lhasa, Shigatse, Lhokha, Kongpo Nyingtri, Sakya, Lhuntse, Tsona, Tsethang, Gyangtse, Choekhorgyal, SangNgag Choeling, and Yartok Nakartse in U-Tsang; Labrang, Siling, Golog, Malho, Ngaba, and Zoege in Amdo; Nagchu, Kyegudo, Dartsedo, Chamdo, Derge, Karze, Nyarong, Gyalthang, and Markham in Kham. In 1982 and 1984, PRC leaders met the exploratory delegations from Dharamshala for talks in Beijing. Following the 1985 fact-finding delegation, the PRC refused to receive further missions.

- 1987** His Holiness the Dalai Lama addresses the US Congressional Human Rights Caucus and presents a Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet, proposing the PRC government start earnest negotiations based on the Middle Way Policy.
- 1987-1989** In 1987, a large-scale peaceful street protest that broke out in Lhasa was brutally suppressed by PRC forces. A new wave of repression and arrests ensues. Following continued peaceful protests, the PRC declared martial law in Lhasa in March 1989.
- 1988** His Holiness the Dalai Lama presents the Strasbourg Proposal in the European Parliament, which elaborates on the fifth point of the Five-Point Peace Plan. In September, Beijing announced its willingness to negotiate with Tibetans and said that His Holiness the Dalai Lama could choose the date and venue for negotiations. Welcoming Beijing's willingness, Dharamshala announces a six-member Tibetan negotiating team. Before the talks can begin, the PRC government reverts to its former hard-line position and says that the Strasbourg Proposal cannot be the basis of talks.
- 1989** His Holiness the Dalai Lama is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his advocacy for a peaceful solution to the issue of Tibet based upon an approach of tolerance and mutual respect.
- 1992** His Holiness the Dalai Lama declares the Strasbourg Proposal invalid due to a lack of positive response from the PRC government. 1993 With Beijing failing to reciprocate the numerous diplomatic initiatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 14 years of formal

contact with the PRC government have come to an end.

- 1994** Beijing holds the third “Tibet Work Forum,” during which it adopts a hard-line policy on Tibet. This marks a significant shift from the more open approach of earlier forums. Given Beijing’s change in stance, His Holiness the Dalai Lama proposes that a referendum of the Tibetan community be held for future dealings with the PRC and to reorient the course of the Tibetan freedom struggle.
- 1997** Based on the preliminary opinion survey and reflecting the Tibetan people’s profound trust in His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies (ATPD) adopted a unanimous resolution in September 1997 stating that His Holiness the Dalai Lama should in the future be the sole person to take decisions to resolve the Sino-Tibet conflict. The ATPD further resolves that whatever decisions His Holiness the Dalai Lama takes will be regarded by all the Tibetan people as being equivalent to a decision reached through a referendum.
- 1998** During the 39th anniversary of the Tibetan people’s National Uprising Day on March 10, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in his public statement, responds to the events of the previous year and thanks the people of Tibet for the trust and hope placed in him. His Holiness the Dalai Lama reiterated his commitment to the Middle Way Policy.
- 2001** His Holiness the Dalai Lama addresses the plenary session of the European Parliament, urging the resumption of dialogue.

2002 Dialogue with China resumes with the first of what will become nine “rounds of talks” based on the Middle Way Policy. The first round of talks between the representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the PRC government took place in September 2002 in Beijing. This is followed by the second round in May–June 2003 in Beijing. In the same year, the United States Congress passed the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 to urge that substantive dialogue between the PRC government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives lead to a negotiated settlement on questions related to Tibet. The 3rd round of the talk was held in September 2004 in Beijing; the 4th round in June–July 2005 in Bern, Switzerland; the 5th round in February 2006 in Guilin City, China; the 6th round in June–July 2007 in Shanghai and Nanjing; an informal meeting in May 2008 in Shenzhen; the 7th round in June–July 2008 in Beijing; the 8th round in October–November 2008 in Beijing; and the 9th round of talks in January–February 2010 in Hunan Province and Beijing.

2008 During the first half of 2008, unprecedented and widespread protests erupted across Tibet. At the 7th round of talks with the PRC government in July 2008, PRC negotiators asked the Tibetan leadership to put in writing the nature of the autonomy it sought. The Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People was presented during the 8th round of talks in October–November 2008. The Memorandum elaborates on how genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people would operate within the framework of the PRC Constitution and Law on National Regional Autonomy. It also defines areas such as the “application of a single administration for the Tibetan nationality in the People’s Republic of

China”, the “nature and structure of autonomy” and the “11 Basic Needs of Tibetans”. However, the PRC leadership rejects the proposal, falsely claiming that the Memorandum includes references to a “greater Tibet” a “Higher Degree of Autonomy,” “covert independence” and “independence in disguise”.

- 2009** Tibetans begin setting themselves on fire to protest against the PRC government’s continued occupation of Tibet and political repression, religious persecution, cultural assimilation and economic marginalisation of its people, and environmental destruction. While attempting to take their lives, self-immolators consistently call for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and freedom for the Tibetan people. Since 2009, 157 recorded self-immolations have taken place inside Tibet.
- 2010** To address the PRC government’s concerns about and objections to the Memorandum, the Tibetan leadership presented a Note on the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People during the 9th round of talks. The Memorandum and the Note describe how genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people would operate within the framework of the PRC Constitution. The note further addresses specific concerns raised by the PRC government with respect to the form of a single administration; political, social, and economic systems; public security; regulation of population migration; language; and religion. The PRC government once again refuses to accept the proposal.
- 2011** His Holiness the Dalai Lama announces that he will devolve his entire political authority to the democratically elected Tibetan political leader Kalon

Tripa of the Central Tibetan Administration. The Tibetan leadership, headed by Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay, reiterates its firm commitment to the Middle Way Policy and clearly states that dialogue between the representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the PRC leadership is the only way forward.

2020 The Tibet Policy and Support Act 2020 is passed by the US Congress and upgrades US support for Tibet, addressing major issues including the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and China's continuing repression of Tibetan people, among others. This bill also solidifies US recognition of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Middle Way Policy.

2021 The 16th Kashag, under the leadership of Sikyong Penpa Tsering, reiterates its firm commitment to the Middle Way Policy as the key foundation for resolving the Sino-Tibet conflict. Sikyong also hopes to resume dialogue with his PRC counterpart, which has remained stalled since 2010. The Task Force on Sino-Tibet Negotiation has been restructured into a new Permanent Strategy Committee, which is now composed of advisors and relevant senior CTA officials led by Sikyong Penpa Tsering.

Endnotes

1. From 1960-1979, Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies (CTPD), 1979-2006, Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD) and 2006 onwards Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, (TPIE)
2. His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced his long-term vision Five-Point Peace Plan at the US Congress in 1987.
3. In 1988 while elaborating on the fifth point of the Five-Point Peace Plan His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced the Strasbourg Proposal

at the European Parliament. This was the first proposal explaining the Middle Way Approach.

4. The Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People was presented during the 8th round of talks in October–November 2008. The Memorandum elaborates on how genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people would operate within the framework of the PRC Constitution and Law on National Regional Autonomy. It defines areas such as the “application of a single administration for the Tibetan nationality in the People’s Republic of China”, the “nature and structure of autonomy” and the “11 Basic Needs of Tibetans”.
5. To address the PRC government’s concerns about and objections to the Memorandum, the Tibetan leadership presents a Note on the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People during the 9th round of talks. The Memorandum and the Note describe how a genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people would operate within the framework of the People’s Republic of China: its Constitution, territorial integrity and sovereignty, the three adherences, and the hierarchy and authority of the PRC Government. The Note further addresses specific concerns raised by the PRC government with respect to the form of single administration; political, social and economic systems; public security; regulation of population migration; language; and religion. The PRC government once again refuses to accept the proposal.
6. The ‘three adherences’ as stipulated by the PRC government are: (1) the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party; (2) socialism with Chinese characteristics; and (3) the Regional National Autonomy system.
7. The 15th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile amended the title of Kalon Tripa to Sikyong (Tibetan Political Leader) in 2012.
8. Gongmeng Law Research Centre of the Open Constitution Initiative was officially shut down by the PRC authority in 2009.
9. The Tibetan government was coerced to sign the agreement in 1951 under the threat of military invasion. In 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama repudiated the agreement following China’s failure to abide by its commitment.



ADDITIONAL READING MATERIALS

- *TIBET - 70 Years of Occupation and Oppression*, DIIR publication, 2021
- *Tibet Was Never a Part of China but the Middle Way Approach Remains a Viable Solution*, DIIR publication, 2018
- *Tibet's Stolen Child: Remembering the Story of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima*, DIIR publication, 2021
- *Tibetan Perspectives on Tibet's Environment*, Tibet Policy Institute, 2020
- *International Resolutions and Recognitions on Tibet (1959 to 2022)*, DIIR publication, 2023
- *Separated from Their Families, Hidden from the World - China's Vast System of Colonial Boarding Schools inside Tibet*, Tibet Action Institute, 2021
- *Mass DNA Collection in the Tibet Autonomous Region from 2016-2022*, Emile Dirks, 13 September 2023
- *Genomic Surveillance - Inside China's DNA Dragnet*, Emile Dirks and James Leibold, Australian Strategic Policy Institute
- *Desecration in Drago County: Destruction of Tibetan Religious Heritage, Arbitrary Detentions and Torture*, Tibet Watch, January 2023
- *Party Above Buddhism: China's Surveillance and Control of Tibetan Monasteries and Nunneries*, International Campaign for Tibet
- *Environmental Defenders of Tibet: China's Persecution of Tibetan Environmental Defenders*, International Campaign for Tibet, June 2022
- *Generation Change: 10 Years of Xi Jinping's Sinification of Securitization of Tibetans*, International Campaign for Tibet, August 2023
- *Sucked Our Marrow: Tibetan Language and Education Rights under Xi Jinping*, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy and Asian Dignity Initiative, 2022
- *A Night-Time Lighting and Analysis of Tibet's Prisons and Detention Centres*, RAND Corporation Europe, 2023

APPENDIX

MEMORANDUM ON GENUINE AUTONOMY FOR THE TIBETAN PEOPLE

(Translated from the original Tibetan)

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the renewal of direct contact with the Central Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2002, extensive discussions have been held between the envoys of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and representatives of the Central Government. In these discussions we have put forth clearly the aspirations of Tibetans. The essence of the Middle Way Approach is to secure genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the scope of the Constitution of the PRC. This is of mutual benefit and based on the long-term interest of both the Tibetan and Chinese peoples. We remain firmly committed not to seek separation or independence. We are seeking a solution to the Tibetan problem through genuine autonomy, which is compatible with the principles on autonomy in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The protection and development of the unique Tibetan identity in all its aspects serves the larger interest of humanity in general and those of the Tibetan and Chinese people in particular.

During the seventh round of talks in Beijing on 1 and 2 July 2008, the Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, Mr. Du Qinglin, explicitly invited suggestions from His Holiness the Dalai Lama for the stability and development of Tibet. The Executive Vice Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, Mr. Zhu Weiqun further said they would like to hear our views on the degree or form of autonomy we are seeking as well as

on all aspects of regional autonomy within the scope of the Constitution of the PRC.

Accordingly, this memorandum puts forth our position on genuine autonomy and how the specific needs of the Tibetan nationality for autonomy and self-government can be met through application of the principles on autonomy of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, as we understand them. On this basis, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is confident that the basic needs of the Tibetan nationality can be met through genuine autonomy within the PRC.

The PRC is a multi-national state, and as in many other parts of the world, it seeks to resolve the nationality question through autonomy and the self-government of the minority nationalities. The Constitution of the PRC contains fundamental principles on autonomy and self-government whose objectives are compatible with the needs and aspirations of the Tibetans. Regional national autonomy is aimed at opposing both the oppression and the separation of nationalities by rejecting both Han Chauvinism and local nationalism. It is intended to ensure the protection of the culture and the identity of minority nationalities by powering them to become masters of their own affairs.

To a very considerable extent Tibetan needs can be met within the constitutional principles on autonomy, as we understand them. On several points, the Constitution gives significant discretionary powers to state organs in the decision-making and on the operation of the system of autonomy. These discretionary powers can be exercised to facilitate genuine autonomy for Tibetans in ways that would respond to the uniqueness of the Tibetan situation. In implementing these principles, legislation relevant to autonomy may consequently need to be reviewed or amended to respond to the specific characteristics and needs of the Tibetan nationality. Given

good will on both sides, outstanding problems can be resolved within the constitutional principles on autonomy. In this way national unity and stability and harmonious relations between the Tibetan and other nationalities will be established.

II. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE TIBETAN NATIONALITY

Tibetans belong to one minority nationality regardless of the current administrative division. The integrity of the Tibetan nationality must be respected. That is the spirit, the intent and the principle underlying the constitutional concept of national regional autonomy as well as the principle of equality of nationalities.

There is no dispute about the fact that Tibetans share the same language, culture, spiritual tradition, core values and customs, that they belong to the same ethnic group and that they have a strong sense of common identity. Tibetans share a common history and despite periods of political or administrative divisions, Tibetans continuously remained united by their religion, culture, education, language, way of life and by their unique high plateau environment.

The Tibetan nationality lives in one contiguous area on the Tibetan plateau, which they have inhabited for millennia and to which they are therefore indigenous. For purposes of the constitutional principles of national regional autonomy Tibetans in the PRC in fact live as a single nationality all over the Tibetan plateau.

On account of the above reasons, the PRC has recognized the Tibetan nationality as one of the 55 minority nationalities.

III. TIBETAN ASPIRATIONS

Tibetans have a rich and distinct history, culture and spiritual

tradition all of which form valuable parts of the heritage of humanity. Not only do Tibetans wish to preserve their own heritage, which they cherish, but equally they wish to further develop their culture and spiritual life and knowledge in ways that are particularly suited to the needs and conditions of humanity in the 21st century.

As a part of the multi-national state of the PRC, Tibetans can benefit greatly from the rapid economic and scientific development the country is experiencing. While wanting to actively participate and contribute to this development, we want to ensure that this happens without the people losing their Tibetan identity, culture and core values and without putting the distinct and fragile environment of the Tibetan plateau, to which Tibetans are indigenous, at risk.

The uniqueness of the Tibetan situation has consistently been recognised within the PRC and has been reflected in the terms of the '17 Point Agreement' and in statements and policies of successive leaders of the PRC since then, and should remain the basis for defining the scope and structure of the specific autonomy to be exercised by the Tibetan nationality within the PRC. The Constitution reflects a fundamental principle of flexibility to accommodate special situations, including the special characteristics and needs of minority nationalities.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's commitment to seek a solution for the Tibetan people within the PRC is clear and unambiguous. This position is in full compliance and agreement with paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's statement in which he emphasized that except for independence all other issues could be resolved through dialogue. Whereas, we are committed, therefore, to fully respect the territorial integrity of the PRC, we expect the Central Government to recognize and fully respect the integrity of the Tibetan nationality and its right to exercise genuine autonomy within

the PRC. We believe that this is the basis for resolving the differences between us and promoting unity, stability and harmony among nationalities.

For Tibetans to advance as a distinct nationality within the PRC, they need to continue to progress and develop economically, socially and politically in ways that correspond to the development of the PRC and the world as a whole while respecting and nurturing the Tibetan characteristics of such development. For this to happen, it is imperative that the right of Tibetans to govern themselves be recognized and implemented throughout the region where they live in compact communities in the PRC, in accordance with the Tibetan nationality's own needs, priorities and characteristics.

The Tibetan people's culture and identity can only be preserved and promoted by the Tibetans themselves and not by any others. Therefore, Tibetans should be capable of self-help, self-development and self-government, and an optimal balance needs to be found between this and the necessary and welcome guidance and assistance for Tibet from the Central Government and other provinces and regions of the PRC.

IV. BASIC NEEDS OF TIBETANS

Subject Matters of Self-government

1. Language

Language is the most important attribute of the Tibetan people's identity. Tibetan is the primary means of communication, the language in which their literature, their spiritual texts and historical as well as scientific works are written. The Tibetan language is not only at the same high level as that of Sanskrit in terms of grammar, but is also the only one that has the capability of translating from Sanskrit without an iota of error.

Therefore, Tibetan language has not only the richest and best-translated literatures, many scholars even contend that it has also the richest and largest number of literary compositions. The Constitution of the PRC, in Article 4, guarantees the freedom of all nationalities “to use and develop their own spoken and written languages...”.

In order for Tibetans to use and develop their own language, Tibetan must be respected as the main spoken and written language. Similarly, the principal language of the Tibetan autonomous areas needs to be Tibetan.

This principle is broadly recognized in the Constitution in Article 121, which states, “the organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas employ the spoken and written language or language in common use in the locality.” Article 10 of the Law on Regional National Autonomy (LRNA) provides that these organs “shall guarantee the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop their own spoken and written languages....”

Consistent with the principle of recognition of Tibetan as the main language in Tibetan areas, the LRNA (Article 36) also allows the autonomous government authorities to decide on “the language used in instruction and enrolment procedures” with regard to education. This implies recognition of the principle that the principal medium of education be Tibetan.

2. Culture

The concept of national regional autonomy is primarily for the purpose of preservation of the culture of minority nationalities. Consequently, the constitution of PRC contains references to cultural preservation in Articles 22, 47 and 119 as also in Article 38 of the LRNA. To Tibetans, Tibetan culture is closely connected to our religion, tradition, language and

identity, which are facing threats at various levels. Since Tibetans live within the multinational state of the PRC, this distinct Tibetan cultural heritage needs protection through appropriate constitutional provisions.

3. Religion

Religion is fundamental to Tibetans and Buddhism is closely linked to their identity. We recognise the importance of separation of church and state, but this should not affect the freedom and practice of believers. It is impossible for Tibetans to imagine personal or community freedom without the freedom of belief, conscience and religion. The Constitution recognizes the importance of religion and protects the right to profess it. Article 36 guarantees all citizens the right to the freedom of religious belief. No one can compel another to believe in or not to believe in any religion. Discrimination on the basis of religion is forbidden.

An interpretation of the constitutional principle in light of international standard would also cover the freedom of the manner of belief or worship. The freedom covers the right of monasteries to be organized and run according to Buddhist monastic tradition, to engage in teachings and studies, and to enroll any number of monks and nuns or age group in accordance with these rules. The normal practice to hold public teachings and the empowerment of large gatherings is covered by this freedom and the state should not interfere in religious practices and traditions, such as the relationship between a teacher and his disciple, management of monastic institutions, and the recognition of reincarnations.

4. Education

The desire of Tibetans to develop and administer their own education system in cooperation and in coordination with

the central government's ministry of education is supported by the principles contained in the Constitution with regard to education. So is the aspiration to engage in and contribute to the development of science and technology. We note the increasing recognition in international scientific development of the contribution which Buddhist psychology, metaphysics, cosmology and the understanding of the mind is making to modern science.

Whereas, under Article 19 of the Constitution the state takes on the overall responsibility to provide education for its citizens, Article 119 recognizes the principle that “[T]he organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas independently administer educational.... affairs in their respective areas...” This principle is also reflected in Article 36 of the LRNA.

Since the degree of autonomy in decision-making is unclear, the point to be emphasised is that the Tibetan need to exercise genuine autonomy with regard to its own nationality's education and this is supported by the principles of the constitution on autonomy.

As for the aspiration to engage in and contribute to the development of scientific knowledge and technology, the Constitution (Article 119) and the LRNA (Article 39) clearly recognise the right of autonomous areas to develop scientific knowledge and technology.

5. Environment Protection

Tibet is the prime source of Asia's great rivers. It also has the earth's loftiest mountains as well as the world's most extensive and highest plateau, rich in mineral resources, ancient forests, and many deep valleys untouched by human disturbances.

This environmental protection practice was enhanced by the

Tibetan people's traditional respect for all forms of life, which prohibits the harming of all sentient beings, whether human or animal. Tibet used to be an unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment.

Today, Tibet's traditional environment is suffering irreparable damage. The effects of this are especially notable on the grasslands, the croplands, the forests, the water resources and the wildlife.

In view of this, according to Articles 45 and 66 of the LNRA, the Tibetan people should be given the right over the environment and allow them to follow their traditional conservation practices.

6. Utilization of Natural Resources

With respect to the protection and management of the natural environment and the utilisation of natural resources the Constitution and the LRNA only acknowledge a limited role for the organs of self-government of the autonomous areas (see LRNA Articles 27, 28, 45, 66, and Article 118 of the Constitution, which pledges that the state "shall give due consideration to the interests of [the national autonomous areas]"). The LRNA recognizes the importance for the autonomous areas to protect and develop forests and grasslands (Article 27) and to "give priority to the rational exploitation and utilization of the natural resources that the local authorities are entitled to develop", but only within the limits of state plans and legal stipulations. In fact, the central role of the State in these matters is reflected in the Constitution (Article 9).

The principles of autonomy enunciated in the Constitution cannot, in our view, truly lead to Tibetans becoming masters of their own destiny if they are not sufficiently involved in decision-making on utilization of natural resources such as

mineral resources, waters, forests, mountains, grasslands, etc.

The ownership of land is the foundation on which the development of natural resources, taxes and revenues of an economy are based. Therefore, it is essential that only the nationality of the autonomous region shall have the legal authority to transfer or lease land, except land owned by the state. In the same manner, the autonomous region must have the independent authority to formulate and implement developmental plans concurrent to the state plans.

7. Economic Development and Trade

Economic Development in Tibet is welcome and much needed. The Tibetan people remain one of the most economically backward regions within the PRC.

The Constitution recognizes the principle that the autonomous authorities have an important role to play in the economic development of their areas in view of local characteristics and needs (Article 118 of the Constitution, also reflected in LRNA Article 25). The Constitution also recognizes the principle of autonomy in the administration and management of finances (Article 117, and LRNA Article 32). At the same time, the Constitution also recognizes the importance of providing State funding and assistance to the autonomous areas to accelerate development (Article 122, LRNA Article 22).

Similarly, Article 31 of the LRNA recognizes the competence of autonomous areas, especially those such as Tibet, adjoining foreign countries, to conduct border trade as well as trade with foreign countries. The recognition of these principles is important to the Tibetan nationality given the region's proximity to foreign countries with which the people have cultural, religious, ethnic and economic affinities.

The assistance rendered by the Central Government and the provinces has temporary benefits, but in the long run if the Tibetan people are not self-reliant and become dependent on others it has greater harm. Therefore, an important objective of autonomy is to make the Tibetan people economically self-reliant.

8. Public Health

The Constitution enunciates the responsibility of the State to provide health and medical services (Article 21). Article 119 recognizes that this is an area of responsibility of the autonomous areas. The LRNA (Article 40) also recognizes the right of organs of self-government of the autonomous areas to “make independent decisions on plans for developing local medical and health services and for advancing both modern and the traditional medicine of the nationalities.”

The existing health system fails to adequately cover the needs of the rural Tibetan population. According to the principles of the above-mentioned laws, the regional autonomous organs need to have the competencies and resources to cover the health need of the entire Tibetan population. They also need the competencies to promote the traditional Tibetan medical and astro system strictly according to traditional practice.

9. Public Security

In matters of public security it is important that the majority of security personnel consists of members of the local nationality who understand and respect local customs and traditions.

What is lacking in Tibetan areas is absence of decision-making authority in the hands of local Tibetan officials. An important aspect of autonomy and self-government is the responsibility for the internal public order and security of the autonomous areas. The Constitution (Article 120) and LRNA

(Article 24) recognise the importance of local involvement and authorise autonomous areas to organise their security within “the military system of the State and practical needs and with the approval of the State Council.”

10. Regulation on Population Migration

The fundamental objective of national regional autonomy and self-government is the preservation of the identity, culture, language and so forth of the minority nationality and to ensure that it is the master of its own affairs. When applied to a particular territory in which the minority nationality lives in a concentrated community or communities, the very principle and purpose of national regional autonomy is disregarded if large scale migration and settlement of the majority Han nationality and other nationalities is encouraged and allowed. Major demographic changes that result from such migration will have the effect of assimilating rather than integrating the Tibetan nationality into the Han nationality and gradually extinguishing the distinct culture and identity of the Tibetan nationality. Also, the influx of large numbers of Han and other nationalities into Tibetan areas will fundamentally change the conditions necessary for the exercise of regional autonomy since the constitutional criteria for the exercise of autonomy, namely that the minority nationality “live in compact communities” in a particular territory is changed and undermined by the population movements and transfers. If such migrations and settlements continue uncontrolled, Tibetans will no longer live in a compact community or communities and will consequently no longer be entitled, under the Constitution, to national regional autonomy. This would effectively violate the very principles of the Constitution in its approach to the nationalities issue.

There is precedent in the PRC for restriction on the movement or residence of citizens. There is only a very

limited recognition of the right of autonomous areas to work out measures to control “the transient population” in those areas. To us it would be vital that the autonomous organs of self-government have the authority to regulate the residence, settlement and employment or economic activities of persons who wish to move to Tibetan areas from other parts of the PRC in order to ensure respect for and the realization of the objectives of the principle of autonomy.

It is not our intention to expel the non-Tibetans who have permanently settled in Tibet and have lived there and grown up there for a considerable time. Our concern is the induced massive movement of primarily Han but also some other nationalities into many areas of Tibet, upsetting existing communities, marginalising the Tibetan population there and threatening the fragile natural environment.

11. Cultural, Educational and Religious Exchanges with other Countries

Besides the importance of exchanges and cooperation between the Tibetan nationality and other nationalities, provinces, and regions of the PRC in the subject matters of autonomy, such as culture, art, education, science, public health, sports, religion, environment, economy and so forth, the power of autonomous areas to conduct such exchanges with foreign countries in these areas is also recognised in the LRNA (Article 42).

V. APPLICATION OF A SINGLE ADMINISTRATION FOR THE TIBETAN NATIONALITY IN THE PRC

In order for the Tibetan nationality to develop and flourish with its distinct identity, culture and spiritual tradition through the exercise of self-government on the above mentioned basic Tibetan needs, the entire community, comprising

all the areas currently designated by the PRC as Tibetan autonomous areas, should be under one single administrative entity. The current administrative divisions, by which Tibetan communities are ruled and administered under different provinces and regions of the PRC, foments fragmentation, promotes unequal development, and weakens the ability of the Tibetan nationality to protect and promote its common cultural, spiritual and ethnic identity. Rather than respecting the integrity of the nationality, this policy promotes its fragmentation and disregards the spirit of autonomy. Whereas the other major minority nationalities such as the Uighurs and Mongols govern themselves almost entirely within their respective single autonomous regions, Tibetans remain as if they were several minority nationalities instead of one.

Bringing all the Tibetans currently living in designated Tibetan autonomous areas within a single autonomous administrative unit is entirely in accordance with the constitutional principle contained in Article 4, also reflected in the LRNA (Article 2), that “regional autonomy is practiced in areas where people of minority nationalities live in concentrated communities.” The LRNA describes regional national autonomy as the “basic policy adopted by the Communist Party of China for the solution of the national question in China” and explains its meaning and intent in its Preface:

the minority nationalities, under unified state leadership, practice regional autonomy in areas where they live in concentrated communities and set up organs of self-government for the exercise of the power of autonomy. Regional national autonomy embodies the state's full respect for and guarantee of the right of the minority nationalities to administer their internal affairs and its adherence to the principle of equality, unity and common prosperity of all nationalities.

It is clear that the Tibetan nationality within the PRC will be able to exercise its right to govern itself and administer its internal affairs effectively only once it can do so through an organ of self-government that has jurisdiction over the Tibetan nationality as a whole.

The LRNA recognizes the principle that boundaries of national autonomous areas may need to be modified. The need for the application of the fundamental principles of the Constitution on regional autonomy through respect of the integrity of the Tibetan nationality is not only totally legitimate, but the administrative changes that may be required to achieve this in no way violate constitutional principles. There are several precedents where this has been actually done.

VI. THE NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF THE AUTONOMY

The extent to which the right to self-government and self-administration can be exercised on the preceding subject matters largely determines the genuine character of Tibetan autonomy. The task at hand is therefore to look into the manner in which autonomy can be regulated and exercised for it to effectively respond to the unique situation and basic needs of the Tibetan nationality.

The exercise of genuine autonomy would include the right of Tibetans to create their own regional government and government institutions and processes that are best suited to their needs and characteristics. It would require that the People's Congress of the autonomous region have the power to legislate on all matters within the competencies of the region (that is the subject matters referred to above) and that other organs of the autonomous government have the power to execute and administer decisions autonomously. Autonomy also entails representation and meaningful participation in national decision-making in the Central Government.

Processes for effective consultation and close cooperation or joint decision-making between the Central Government and the regional government on areas of common interest also need to be in place for the autonomy to be effective.

A crucial element of genuine autonomy is the guarantee the Constitution or other laws provide that powers and responsibilities allocated to the autonomous region cannot be unilaterally abrogated or changed. This means that neither the Central Government nor the autonomous region's government should be able, without the consent of the other, to change the basic features of the autonomy.

The parameters and specifics of such genuine autonomy for Tibet that respond to the unique needs and conditions of the Tibetan people and region should be set out in some detail in regulations on the exercise of autonomy, as provided for in Article 116 of the Constitution (enacted in LRNA Article 19) or, if it is found to be more appropriate, in a separate set of laws or regulations adopted for that purpose. The Constitution, including Article 31, provides the flexibility to adopt special laws to respond to unique situations such as the Tibetan one, while respecting the established social, economic and political system of the country.

The Constitution in Section VI provides for organs of self-government of national autonomous regions and acknowledges their power to legislate. Thus Article 116 (enacted in Article 19 of the LRNA) refers to their power to enact "separate regulations in light of the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationality or nationalities in the areas concerned." Similarly, the Constitution recognises the power of autonomous administration in a number of areas (Article 117-120) as well as the power of autonomous governments to apply flexibility in implementing the laws and policies of the Central Government and higher state organs to suit the

conditions of the autonomous area concerned (Article 115).

The above-mentioned legal provisions do contain significant limitations to the decision-making authority of the autonomous organs of government. But the Constitution nevertheless recognises the principle that organs of self-government make laws and policy decisions that address local needs and that these may be different from those adopted elsewhere, including by the Central Government.

Although the needs of the Tibetans are broadly consistent with the principles on autonomy contained in the Constitution, as we have shown, their realisation is impeded because of the existence of a number of problems, which makes the implementation of those principles today difficult or ineffective.

Implementation of genuine autonomy, for example, requires clear divisions of powers and responsibilities between the Central Government and the government of the autonomous region with respect to subject matter competency. Currently there is no such clarity and the scope of legislative powers of autonomous regions is both uncertain and severely restricted. Thus, whereas the Constitution intends to recognise the special need for autonomous regions to legislate on many matters that affect them, the requirements of Article 116 for prior approval at the highest level of the Central Government - by the Standing Committee of National People's Congress (NPC) - inhibit the implementation of this principle of autonomy. In reality, it is only autonomous regional congresses that expressly require such approval, while the congresses of ordinary (not autonomous) provinces of the PRC do not need prior permission and merely report the passage of regulations to the Standing Committee of the NPC "for the record" (Article 100).

The exercise of autonomy is further subject to a considerable number of laws and regulations, according to Article 115 of the Constitution. Certain laws effectively restrict the autonomy of the autonomous region, while others are not always consistent with one another. The result is that the exact scope of the autonomy is unclear and is not fixed, since it is unilaterally changed with the enactment of laws and regulations at higher levels of the state, and even by changes in policy. There is also no adequate process for consultation or for settling differences that arise between the organs of the Central Government and of the regional government with respect to the scope and exercise of autonomy. In practice, the resulting uncertainty limits the initiative of regional authorities and impedes the exercise of genuine autonomy by Tibetans today.

We do not at this stage wish to enter into details regarding these and other impediments to the exercise of genuine autonomy today by Tibetans, but mention them by way of example so that these may be addressed in the appropriate manner in our dialogue in the future. We will continue to study the Constitution and other relevant legal provisions and, when appropriate, will be pleased to provide further analysis of these issues, as we understand them.

VII. THE WAY FORWARD

As stated at the beginning of this memorandum, our intention is to explore how the needs of the Tibetan nationality can be met within the framework of PRC since we believe these needs are consistent with the principles of the Constitution on autonomy. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama stated on a number of occasions, we have no hidden agenda. We have no intention at all of using any agreement on genuine autonomy as stepping stone for separation from the PRC.

The objective of the Tibetan Government in Exile is to

represent the interests of the Tibetan people and to speak on their behalf. Therefore, it will no longer be needed and will be dissolved once an agreement is reached between us. In fact, His Holiness has reiterated his decision not to accept any political office in Tibet at any time in the future. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, nevertheless, plans to use all his personal influence to ensure such an agreement would have the legitimacy necessary to obtain the support of the Tibetan people.

Given these strong commitments, we propose that the next step in this process be the agreement to start serious discussions on the points raised in this memorandum. For this purpose we propose that we discuss and agree on a mutually agreeable mechanism or mechanisms and a timetable to do so effectively.



NOTE ON THE MEMORANDUM ON GENUINE AUTONOMY FOR THE TIBETAN PEOPLE

(Formally presented by the Envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to their Chinese counterparts during the ninth round of dialogue in Beijing, PRC. Translated from the Tibetan original)

Introduction

This Note addresses the principal concerns and objections raised by the Chinese Central Government regarding the substance of the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People (hereinafter ‘the Memorandum’) which was presented to the Government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on October 31, 2008 at the eighth round of talks in Beijing.

Having carefully studied the responses and reactions of Minister Du Qinglin and Executive Vice-Minister Zhu Weiqun conveyed during the talks, including the written Note, and in statements made by the Chinese Central Government following the talks, it seems that some issues raised in the Memorandum may have been misunderstood, while others appear to have not been understood by the Chinese Central Government.

The Chinese Central Government maintains that the Memorandum contravenes the Constitution of the PRC as well as the ‘three adherences’^[1]. The Tibetan side believes that the Tibetan people’s needs, as set out in the Memorandum, can be met within the framework and spirit of the Constitution and its principles on autonomy and that these proposals do not contravene or conflict with the ‘three adherences’. We believe that the present Note will help to clarify this.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama started internal discussions, as

early as in 1974, to find ways to resolve the future status of Tibet through an autonomy arrangement instead of seeking independence. In 1979 Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping expressed willingness to discuss and resolve all issues except the independence of Tibet. Since then His Holiness the Dalai Lama has taken numerous initiatives to bring about a mutually acceptable negotiated solution to the question of Tibet. In doing so His Holiness the Dalai Lama has steadfastly followed the Middle-Way approach, which means the pursuit of a mutually acceptable and mutually beneficial solution through negotiations, in the spirit of reconciliation and compromise. The Five-Point Peace Plan and the Strasbourg Proposal were presented in this spirit. With the failure to elicit any positive response from the Chinese Central Government to these initiatives, along with the imposition of martial law in March 1989 and the deterioration of the situation in Tibet, His Holiness the Dalai Lama felt compelled to state in 1991 that his Strasbourg Proposal had become ineffectual. His Holiness the Dalai Lama nevertheless maintained his commitment to the Middle-Way approach.

The re-establishment of a dialogue process between the Chinese Central Government and representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2002 provided the opportunity for each side to explain their positions and to gain a better understanding of the concerns, needs and interests of the other side. Moreover, taking into consideration the Chinese Central Government's real concerns, needs and interests, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has given much thought with due consideration to the reality of the situation. This reflects His Holiness the Dalai Lama's flexibility, openness and pragmatism and, above all, sincerity and determination to seek a mutually beneficial solution.

The Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People was prepared in response to the suggestion from the Chinese Central Government made at the seventh round of talks in July 2008. However, the Chinese Central Government's

reactions and main criticisms of the Memorandum appear to be based not on the merits of that proposal which was officially presented to it, but on earlier proposals that were made public as well as other statements made at different times and contexts.

The Memorandum and the present Note strongly reemphasize that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is not seeking independence or separation but a solution within the framework of the Constitution and its principles on autonomy as reiterated many times in the past.

The Special General Meeting of the Tibetans in Diaspora held in November 2008 in Dharamsala reconfirmed for the time being the mandate for the continuation of the dialogue process with the PRC on the basis of the Middle-Way approach. On their part, members of the international community urged both sides to return to the talks. A number of them expressed the opinion that the Memorandum can form a good basis for discussion.

1. Respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the PRC

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has repeatedly stated that he is not seeking separation of Tibet from the People's Republic of China, and that he is not seeking independence for Tibet. He seeks a sustainable solution within the PRC. This position is stated unambiguously in the Memorandum.

The Memorandum calls for the exercise of genuine autonomy, not for independence, 'semi-independence' or 'independence in disguised form'. The substance of the Memorandum, which explains what is meant by genuine autonomy, makes this unambiguously clear. The form and degree of autonomy proposed in the Memorandum is consistent with the principles on autonomy in the Constitution of the

PRC. Autonomous regions in different parts of the world exercise the kind of self-governance that is proposed in the Memorandum, without thereby challenging or threatening the sovereignty and unity of the state of which they are a part. This is true of autonomous regions within unitary states as well as those with federal characteristics. Observers of the situation, including unbiased political leaders and scholars in the international community, have also acknowledged that the Memorandum is a call for autonomy within the PRC and not for independence or separation from the PRC.

The Chinese government's viewpoint on the history of Tibet is different from that held by Tibetans and His Holiness the Dalai Lama is fully aware that Tibetans cannot agree to it. History is a past event and it cannot be altered. However, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's position is forward-looking, not backward grasping. He does not wish to make this difference on history to be an obstacle in seeking a mutually beneficial common future within the PRC.

The Chinese Central Government's responses to the Memorandum reveal a persistent suspicion on its part that His Holiness' proposals are tactical initiatives to advance the hidden agenda of independence. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is aware of the PRC's concerns and sensitivities with regard to the legitimacy of the present situation in Tibet. For this reason His Holiness the Dalai Lama has conveyed through his Envoys and publicly stated that he stands ready to lend his moral authority to endow an autonomy agreement, once reached, with the legitimacy it will need to gain the support of the people and to be properly implemented.

2. Respecting the Constitution of the PRC

The Memorandum explicitly states that the genuine autonomy sought by His Holiness the Dalai Lama for the Tibetan

people is to be accommodated within the framework of the Constitution and its principles on autonomy, not outside of it.

The fundamental principle underlying the concept of national regional autonomy is to preserve and protect a minority nationality's identity, language, custom, tradition and culture in a multi-national state based on equality and cooperation. The Constitution provides for the establishment of organs of self-government where the national minorities live in concentrated communities in order for them to exercise the power of autonomy. In conformity with this principle, the White Paper on Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet (May 2004), states that minority nationalities are "arbiters of their own destiny and masters of their own affairs".

Within the parameters of its underlying principles, a Constitution needs to be responsive to the needs of the times and adapt to new or changed circumstances. The leaders of the PRC have demonstrated the flexibility of the Constitution of the PRC in their interpretation and implementation of it, and have also enacted modifications and amendments in response to changing circumstances. If applied to the Tibetan situation, such flexibility would, as is stated in the Memorandum, indeed permit the accommodation of the Tibetan needs within the framework of the Constitution and its principles on autonomy.

3. Respecting the 'three adherences'

The position of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as presented in the Memorandum, in no way challenges or brings into question the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party in the PRC. At the same time, it is reasonable to expect that, in order to promote unity, stability and a harmonious society, the Party would change its attitude of treating Tibetan culture, religion and identity as a threat.

The Memorandum also does not challenge the socialist system of the PRC. Nothing in it suggests a demand for a change to this system or for its exclusion from Tibetan areas. As for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's views on socialism, it is well known that he has always favored a socialist economy and ideology that promotes equality and benefits to uplift the poorer sections of society.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's call for genuine autonomy within the PRC recognizes the principles on autonomy for minority nationalities contained in the Constitution of the PRC and is in line with the declared intent of those principles. As pointed out in the Memorandum, the current implementation of the provisions on autonomy, however, effectively results in the denial of genuine autonomy to the Tibetan and fails to provide for the exercise of the right of Tibetans to govern themselves and to be "masters of their own affairs." Today, important decisions pertaining to the welfare of Tibetans are not being made by Tibetans. Implementing the proposed genuine autonomy explained in the Memorandum would ensure for the Tibetans the ability to exercise the right to true autonomy and therefore to become masters of their own affairs, in line with the Constitutional principles on autonomy.

Thus, the Memorandum for genuine autonomy does not oppose the 'three adherences'.

4. Respecting the hierarchy and authority of the Chinese Central Government

The proposals contained in the Memorandum in no way imply a denial of the authority of the National People's Congress (NPC) and other organs of the Chinese Central Government. As stated in the Memorandum, the proposal fully respects the hierarchical differences between the Central Government and its organs, including the NPC, and the autonomous

government of Tibet.

Any form of genuine autonomy entails a division and allocation of powers and responsibilities, including that of making laws and regulations, between the central and the autonomous local government. Of course, the power to adopt laws and regulations is limited to the areas of competency of the autonomous region. This is true in unitary states as well as in federal systems.

This principle is also recognized in the Constitution. The spirit of the Constitutional provisions on autonomy is to give autonomous regions broader decision-making authority over and above that enjoyed by ordinary provinces. But today, the requirement for prior approval by the Standing Committee of the NPC for all laws and regulations of the autonomous regions (Art. 116 of the Constitution) is exercised in a way that in fact leaves the autonomous regions with much less authority to make decisions that suit local conditions than that of the ordinary (not autonomous) provinces of China.

Whenever there is a division and allocation of decision-making power between different levels of government (between the Central Government and the autonomous government), it is important to have processes in place for consultation and cooperation. This helps to improve mutual understanding and to ensure that contradictions and possible inconsistencies in policies, laws and regulations are minimized. It also reduces the chances of disputes arising regarding the exercise of the powers allocated to these different organs of government. Such processes and mechanisms do not put the Central and autonomous governments on equal footing, nor do they imply the rejection of the leadership of the Central Government.

The important feature of entrenchment of autonomy arrangements in the Constitution or in other appropriate ways also does not imply equality of status between the central and local government nor does it restrict or weaken the authority of the former. The measure is intended to provide (legal) security to both the autonomous and the central authorities that neither can unilaterally change the basic features of the autonomy they have set up, and that a process of consultation must take place at least for fundamental changes to be enacted.

5. Concerns raised by the Chinese Central Government on specific competencies referred to in the Memorandum

a. Public Security

Concern was raised over the inclusion of public security aspects in the package of competencies allocated to the autonomous region in the Memorandum because the government apparently interpreted this to mean defense matters. National defense and public security are two different matters. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is clear on the point that the responsibility for national defense of the PRC is and should remain with the Central Government. This is not a competency to be exercised by the autonomous region. This is indeed the case in most autonomy arrangements. The Memorandum in fact refers specifically to “internal public order and security,” and makes the important point that the majority of the security personnel should be Tibetans, because they understand the local customs and traditions. It also helps to curb local incidents leading to disharmony among the nationalities. The Memorandum in this respect is consistent with the principle enunciated in Article 120 of the Constitution (reflected also in Article 24 of the LRNA), which states:

“The organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas may, in accordance with the military system of the state and practical local needs and with approval of the

State Council, organize local public security forces for the maintenance of public order.”

It should also be emphasized in this context that the Memorandum at no point proposes the withdrawal of People's Liberation Army (PLA) from Tibetan areas.

b. Language

The protection, use, and development of the Tibetan language are one of the crucial issues for the exercise of genuine autonomy by Tibetans. The emphasis on the need to respect Tibetan as the main or principal language in the Tibetan areas is not controversial, since a similar position is expressed in the Chinese Central Government's White Paper on Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet, where it is stated that regulations adopted by the Tibet regional government prescribe that “equal attention be given to Tibetan and Han-Chinese languages in the Tibetan Autonomous region, with the Tibetan language as the major one...” (emphasis added). Moreover, the very usage of “main language” in the Memorandum clearly implies the use of other languages, too.

The absence of a demand in the Memorandum that Chinese should also be used and taught should not be interpreted as an “exclusion” of this language, which is the principal and common language in the PRC as a whole. It should also be noted in this context that the leadership in exile has taken steps to encourage Tibetans in exile to learn Chinese.

Tibetan proposal which emphasizes the study of the Tibetan people's own language should therefore not be interpreted as being a “separatist view”.

c. Regulation of Population Migration

The Memorandum proposes that the local government of the autonomous region should have the competency to regulate the residence, settlement and employment or economic activities

of persons who wish to move to Tibetan areas from elsewhere. This is a common feature of autonomy and is certainly not without precedent in the PRC.

A number of countries have instituted systems or adopted laws to protect vulnerable regions or indigenous and minority peoples from excessive immigration from other parts of the country. The Memorandum explicitly states that it is not suggesting the expulsion of non-Tibetans who have lived in Tibetan areas for years. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Kashag also made this clear in earlier statements, as did the Envoys in their discussions with their Chinese counterparts. In an address to the European Parliament on December 4, 2008, His Holiness the Dalai Lama reiterated that “our intention is not to expel non-Tibetans. Our concern is the induced mass movement of primarily Han, but also some other nationalities, into many Tibetan areas, which in turn marginalizes the native Tibetan population and threatens Tibet’s fragile environment.” From this it is clear that His Holiness is not at all suggesting that Tibet be inhabited by only Tibetans, with other nationalities not being able to do so. The issue concerns the appropriate division of powers regarding the regulation of transient, seasonal workers and new settlers so as to protect the vulnerable population indigenous to Tibetan areas.

In responding to the Memorandum the Chinese Central Government rejected the proposition that the autonomous authorities would regulate the entrance and economic activities of persons from other parts of the PRC in part because “in the Constitution and the Law on Regional National Autonomy there are no provisions to restrict transient population.” In fact, the Law on Regional National Autonomy, in its Article 43, explicitly mandates such a regulation:

“In accordance with legal stipulations, the organs of self-government of national autonomous areas shall work out measures for control of the transient population.”

Thus, the Tibetan proposal contained in the Memorandum in this regard is not incompatible with the Constitution.

d. Religion

The point made in the Memorandum, that Tibetans be free to practice their religion according to their own beliefs, is entirely consistent with the principles of religious freedom contained in the Constitution of the PRC. It is also consistent with the principle of separation of religion and polity adopted in many countries of the world.

Article 36 of the Constitution guarantees that no one can “compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in any religion.” We endorse this principle but observe that today the government authorities do interfere in important ways in the ability of Tibetans to practice their religion.

The spiritual relationship between master and student and the giving of religious teachings, etc. are essential components of the Dharma practice. Restricting these is a violation of religious freedom. Similarly, the interference and direct involvement by the state and its institutions in matters of recognition of reincarnated lamas, as provided in the regulation on the management of reincarnated lamas adopted by the State on July 18, 2007 is a grave violation of the freedom of religious belief enshrined in the Constitution.

The practice of religion is widespread and fundamental to the Tibetan people. Rather than seeing Buddhist practice as a threat, concerned authorities should respect it. Traditionally or historically Buddhism has always been a major unifying and positive factor between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples.

e. Single Administration

The desire of Tibetans to be governed within one autonomous region is fully in keeping with the principles on autonomy of the Constitution. The rationale for the need to respect the integrity of the Tibetan nationality is clearly stated in the Memorandum and does not mean “Greater or Smaller Tibet”. In fact, as pointed out in the Memorandum, the Law on Regional National Autonomy itself allows for this kind of modification of administrative boundaries if proper procedures are followed. Thus the proposal in no way violates the Constitution.

As the Envoys pointed out in earlier rounds of talks, many Chinese leaders, including Premier Zhou Enlai, Vice Premier Chen Yi and Party Secretary Hu Yaobang, supported the consideration of bringing all Tibetan areas under a single administration. Some of the most senior Tibetan leaders in the PRC, including the 10th Panchen Lama, Ngapo Ngawang Jigme and Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal have also called for this and affirming that doing so would be in accordance with the PRC’s Constitution and its laws. In 1956 a special committee, which included senior Communist Party member Sangye Yeshe (Tian Bao), was appointed by the Chinese Central Government to make a detailed plan for the integration of the Tibetan areas into a single autonomous region, but the work was later stopped on account of ultra-leftist elements.

The fundamental reason for the need to integrate the Tibetan areas under one administrative region is to address the deeply-felt desire of Tibetans to exercise their autonomy as a people and to protect and develop their culture and spiritual values in this context. This is also the fundamental premise and purpose of the Constitutional principles on regional national autonomy as reflected in Article 4 of the Constitution. Tibetans are concerned about the integrity of the Tibetan nationality, which the proposal respects and which the continuation of the present system does not. Their common

historical heritage, spiritual and cultural identity, language and even their particular affinity to the unique Tibetan plateau environment is what binds Tibetans as one nationality. Within the PRC, Tibetans are recognized as one nationality and not several nationalities. Those Tibetans presently living in Tibet autonomous prefectures and counties incorporated into other provinces also belong to the same Tibetan nationality. Tibetans, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, are primarily concerned about the protection and development of Tibetan culture, spiritual values, national identity and the environment. Tibetans are not asking for the expansion of Tibetan autonomous areas. They are only demanding that those areas already recognized as Tibetan autonomous areas come under a single administration, as is the case in the other autonomous regions of the PRC. So long as Tibetans do not have the opportunity to govern themselves under a single administration, preservation of Tibetan culture and way of life cannot be done effectively. Today more than half of the Tibetan population is subjected to the priorities and interests first and foremost of different provincial governments in which they have no significant role.

As explained in the Memorandum, the Tibetan people can only genuinely exercise regional national autonomy if they can have their own autonomous government, people's congress and other organs of self-government with jurisdiction over the Tibetan nationality as a whole. This principle is reflected in the Constitution, which recognizes the right of minority nationalities to practice regional autonomy "in areas where they live in concentrated communities" and to "set up organs of self-government for the exercise of the power of autonomy," (Article 4). If the "state's full respect for and guarantee of the right of the minority nationalities to administer their internal affairs" solemnly declared in the preamble of the Law on Regional National Autonomy is interpreted not to include the right to choose to form an

autonomous region that encompasses the whole people in the contiguous areas where its members live in concentrated communities, the Constitutional principles on autonomy are themselves undermined.

Keeping Tibetans divided and subject to different laws and regulations denies the people the exercise of genuine autonomy and makes it difficult for them to maintain their distinct cultural identity. It is not impossible for the Central Government to make the necessary administrative adjustment when elsewhere in the PRC, notably in the case of Inner Mongolia, Ningxia and Guangxi Autonomous Regions, it has done just that.

f. Political, Social and Economic System

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has repeatedly and consistently stated that no one, least of all he, has any intention to restore the old political, social and economic system that existed in Tibet prior to 1959. It would be the intention of a future autonomous Tibet to further improve the social, economic and political situation of Tibetans, not to return to the past. It is disturbing and puzzling that the Chinese government persists, despite all evidence to the contrary, to accuse His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his Administration of the intention to restore the old system.

All countries and societies in the world, including China, have had political systems in the past that would be entirely unacceptable today. The old Tibetan system is no exception. The world has evolved socially and politically and has made enormous strides in terms of the recognition of human rights and standards of living. Tibetans in exile have developed their own modern democratic system as well as education and health systems and institutions. In this way, Tibetans have become citizens of the world at par with those of other countries. It is obvious that Tibetans in the PRC have also

advanced under Chinese rule and improved their social, education, health and economic situation. However, the standard of living of the Tibetan people remains the most backward in the PRC and Tibetan human rights are not being respected.

6. Recognizing the Core Issue

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other members of the exiled leadership have no personal demands to make. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's concern is with the rights and welfare of the Tibetan people. Therefore, the fundamental issue that needs to be resolved is the faithful implementation of genuine autonomy that will enable the Tibetan people to govern themselves in accordance with their own genius and needs.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaks on behalf of the Tibetan people, with whom he has a deep and historical relationship and one based on full trust. In fact, on no issue are Tibetans as completely in agreement as on their demand for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet. It cannot be disputed that His Holiness the Dalai Lama legitimately represents the Tibetan people, and he is certainly viewed as their true representative and spokesperson by them. It is indeed only by means of dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama that the Tibetan issue can be resolved. The recognition of this reality is important.

This emphasizes the point, often made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, that his engagement for the cause of Tibet is not for the purpose of claiming certain personal rights or political position for him, nor attempting to stake claims for the Tibetan administration in exile. Once an agreement is reached, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile will be dissolved and the Tibetans working in Tibet should carry on the main responsibility of administering Tibet. His Holiness the Dalai

Lama made it clear on numerous occasions that he will not hold any political position in Tibet.

7. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Co-operation

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has offered, and remains prepared, to formally issue a statement that would serve to allay the Chinese Central Government's doubts and concerns as to his position and intentions on matters that have been identified above.

The formulation of the statement should be done after ample consultations between representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Central Government, respectively, to ensure that such a statement would satisfy the fundamental needs of the Chinese Central Government as well as those of the Tibetan people.

It is important that both parties address any concern directly with their counterparts, and not use those issues as ways to block the dialogue process as has occurred in the past.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is taking this initiative in the belief that it is possible to find common ground with the People's Republic of China consistent with the principles on autonomy contained in PRC's Constitution and with the interests of the Tibetan people. In that spirit, it is the expectation and hope of His Holiness the Dalai Lama that the representatives of the PRC will use the opportunity presented by the Memorandum and this Note to deepen discussion and make substantive progress in order to develop mutual understanding.

[1] The 'three adherences' as stipulated by the Central Government are: (1) the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party; (2) the socialism with Chinese characteristics; and (3) the Regional National Autonomy system.

FIVE POINT PEACE PLAN

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Address to the U.S. Congressional Human Rights Caucus, 21 September 1987

The world is increasingly interdependent, so lasting peace—national, regional, and global—can only be achieved if we think in terms of broader interest rather than parochial needs. At this time, it is crucial that all of us, the strong and the weak, contribute in our own way. I speak to you today as the leader of the Tibetan people and as a Buddhist monk devoted to the principles of a religion based on love and compassion. Above all, I am here as a human being who is destined to share this planet with you and all others as brothers and sisters. As the world grows smaller, we need each other more than in the past. This is true in all parts of the world, including the continent I come from.

At present in Asia, as elsewhere, tensions are high. There are open conflicts in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and in my own country, Tibet. To a large extent, these problems are symptoms of the underlying tensions that exist among the area's great powers. In order to resolve regional conflicts, an approach is required that takes into account the interests of all relevant countries and peoples, large and small. Unless comprehensive solutions are formulated that take into account the aspirations of the people most directly concerned, piecemeal or merely expedient measures will only create new problems.

The Tibetan people are eager to contribute to regional and world peace, and I believe they are in a unique position to do so. Traditionally, Tibetans are peace-loving and non-violent people. Since Buddhism was introduced to Tibet over one thousand years ago, Tibetans have practised non-violence with respect to all forms of life. This attitude has also been extended to our country's international relations. Tibet's

highly strategic position in the heart of Asia, separating the continent's great powers—India, China, and the USSR—has throughout history endowed it with an essential role in the maintenance of peace and stability. This is precisely why, in the past, Asia's empires went to great lengths to keep one another out of Tibet. Tibet's value as an independent buffer state was integral to the region's stability.

When the newly formed People's Republic of China invaded Tibet in 1949-50, it created a new source of conflict. This was highlighted when, following the Tibetan national uprising against the Chinese and my flight to India in 1959, tensions between China and India escalated into the 1962 border war. Today, large numbers of troops are again massed on both sides of the Himalayan border, and tension is once again dangerously high.

The real issue, of course, is not the Indo-Tibetan border demarcation. It is China's illegal occupation of Tibet that has given it direct access to the Indian subcontinent. The Chinese authorities have attempted to confuse the issue by claiming that Tibet has always been a part of China. This is untrue. Tibet was a fully independent state when the People's Liberation Army invaded the country in 1949-50.

Since Tibetan emperors unified Tibet over a thousand years ago, our country was able to maintain its independence until the middle of this century. At times, Tibet extended its influence over neighbouring countries and peoples and, in other periods, came itself under the influence of powerful foreign rulers—the Mongol Khans, the Gorkhas of Nepal, the Manchu Emperors, and the British in India.

It is, of course, not uncommon for states to be subjected to foreign influence or interference. Although so-called satellite relationships are perhaps the clearest examples of this, most

major powers exert influence over less powerful allies or neighbours. As the most authoritative legal studies have shown, in Tibet's case, the country's occasional subjection to foreign influence never entailed a loss of independence. And there can be no doubt that when Peking's communist armies entered Tibet, Tibet was in all respects an independent state.

China's aggression, condemned by virtually all nations of the free world, was a flagrant violation of international law. As China's military occupation of Tibet continues, the world should remember that, though Tibetans have lost their freedom, under international law, Tibet is still an independent state under illegal occupation.

It is not my purpose to enter into a political or legal discussion here concerning Tibet's status. I just wish to emphasise the obvious and undisputed fact that we Tibetans are a distinct people with our own culture, language, religion, and history. But for China's occupation, Tibet would still, today, fulfil its natural role as a buffer state, maintaining and promoting peace in Asia.

It is my sincere desire, as well as that of the Tibetan people, to restore to Tibet her invaluable role by converting the entire country, comprising the three provinces of U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo, once more into a place of stability, peace, and harmony. In the best of Buddhist tradition, Tibet would extend its services and hospitality to all who further the cause of world peace, and the well-being of mankind, and the natural environment we share.

Despite the holocaust inflicted upon our people in the past decades of occupation, I have always strived to find a solution through direct and honest discussions with the Chinese. In 1982, following the change of leadership in China and the establishment of direct contacts with the government in Peking,

I sent my representatives to Peking to open talks concerning the future of my country and people.

We entered the dialogue with a sincere and positive attitude and with the willingness to take into account the legitimate needs of the People's Republic of China. I hoped that this attitude would be reciprocated and that a solution could eventually be found that would satisfy and safeguard the aspirations and interests of both parties. Unfortunately, China has consistently responded to our efforts in a defensive manner, as though our detailing of Tibet's very real difficulties was criticism for its own sake.

To our even greater dismay, the Chinese government misused the opportunity for a genuine dialogue. Instead of addressing the real issues facing the six million Tibetan people, China has attempted to reduce the question of Tibet to a discussion of my own personal status.

It is against this background and in response to the tremendous support and encouragement I have been given by you and other people I have met during this trip that I wish today to clarify the principal issues and to propose, in a spirit of openness and conciliation, a first step towards a lasting solution. I hope this may contribute to a future of friendship and cooperation with all of our neighbours, including the Chinese people.

This peace plan contains five basic components:

1. Transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of peace;
2. Abandonment of China's population transfer policy, which threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a people;
3. Respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms;

4. Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment and the abandonment of China's use of Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and the dumping of nuclear waste;
5. Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future status of Tibet and of relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples.

Let me explain these five components.

1. I propose that the whole of Tibet, including the eastern provinces of Kham and Amdo, be transformed into a zone of "Ahimsa", a Hindi term used to mean a state of peace and non-violence.

The establishment of such a peace zone would be in keeping with Tibet's historical role as a peaceful and neutral Buddhist nation and buffer state separating the continent's great powers. It would also be in keeping with Nepal's proposal to proclaim Nepal a peace zone and with China's declared support for such a proclamation. The peace zone proposed by Nepal would have a much greater impact if it were to include Tibet and neighbouring areas.

The establishment of a peace zone in Tibet would require the withdrawal of Chinese troops and military installations from the country, which would enable India to also withdraw troops and military installations from the Himalayan regions bordering Tibet. This would be achieved under an international agreement that would satisfy China's legitimate security needs and build trust among the Tibetan, Indian, Chinese, and other peoples of the region. This is in everyone's best interest, particularly that of China and India, as it would enhance their security while reducing the economic burden of maintaining high troop concentrations on the disputed Himalayan border.

Historically, relations between China and India were never strained. It was only when Chinese armies marched into Tibet,

creating for the first time a common border, that tensions arose between these two powers, ultimately leading to the 1962 war. Since then, numerous dangerous incidents have continued to occur. A restoration of good relations between the world's two most populous countries would be greatly facilitated if they were separated, as they were throughout history, by a large and friendly buffer region.

To improve relations between the Tibetan people and the Chinese, the first requirement is the creation of trust. After the holocaust of the last decades, in which over one million Tibetans—one sixth of the population—lost their lives and at least as many lingered in prison camps because of their religious beliefs and love of freedom, only a withdrawal of Chinese troops could start a genuine process of reconciliation. The vast occupation force in Tibet is a daily reminder to the Tibetans of the oppression and suffering they have all experienced. A troop withdrawal would be an essential signal that, in the future, a meaningful relationship might be established with the Chinese based on friendship and trust.

2. The population transfer of Chinese into Tibet, which the government in Peking pursues in order to force a “final solution” to the Tibetan problem by reducing the Tibetan population to an insignificant and disenfranchised minority in Tibet itself, must be stopped.

The massive transfer of Chinese civilians into Tibet in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) threatens the very existence of the Tibetans as a distinct people. In the eastern parts of our country, the Chinese now greatly outnumber the Tibetans. In Amdo province, for example, where I was born, according to Chinese statistics, there are 2.5 million Chinese and only 750,000 Tibetans. Even in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (i.e., central and western Tibet), Chinese

government sources now confirm that Chinese outnumber Tibetans.

The Chinese population transfer policy is not new. It has been systematically applied to other areas before. Earlier in this century, the Manchus were a distinct race with their own culture and traditions. Today, only two to three million Manchurians are left in Manchuria, where 75 million Chinese have settled. In Eastern Turkestan, which the Chinese now call Sinkiang, the Chinese population has grown from 200,000 in 1949 to 7 million, more than half of the total population of 13 million. In the wake of the Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia, the Chinese number 8.5 million and the Mongols 2.5 million.

Today, in the whole of Tibet, 7.5 million Chinese settlers have already been sent, outnumbering the Tibetan population of 6 million. In central and western Tibet, now referred to by the Chinese as the "Tibet Autonomous Region" (TAR), Chinese sources admit that the 1.9 million Tibetans already constitute a minority of the region's population. These numbers do not take the estimated 300,000–500,000 troops in Tibet into account—250,000 of them in the "TAR."

For the Tibetans to survive as a people, it is imperative that the population transfer be stopped and Chinese settlers return to China. Otherwise, Tibetans will soon be no more than a tourist attraction and a relic of a noble past.

3. Fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms must be respected in Tibet. The Tibetan people must once again be free to develop culturally, intellectually, economically, and spiritually and to exercise basic democratic freedoms.

Human rights violations in Tibet are among the most serious in the world. Discrimination is practised in Tibet under a

policy of “apartheid” which the Chinese call “segregation and assimilation” Tibetans are, at best, second-class citizens in their own country. Deprived of all basic democratic rights and freedoms, they exist under a colonial administration in which all real power is wielded by Chinese officials of the Communist Party and the army.

Although the Chinese government allows Tibetans to rebuild some Buddhist monasteries and worship in them, it still forbids serious study and teaching of religion. Only a small number of people, approved by the Communist Party, are permitted to join the monasteries.

While Tibetans in exile exercise their democratic rights under a constitution promulgated by me in 1963, thousands of our countrymen suffer in prisons and labour camps in Tibet for their religious or political convictions.

4. Serious efforts must be made to restore the natural environment in Tibet. Tibet should not be used for the production of nuclear weapons or the dumping of nuclear waste.

Tibetans have a great respect for all forms of life. This inherent feeling is enhanced by the Buddhist faith, which prohibits the harming of all sentient beings, whether human or animal. Prior to the Chinese invasion, Tibet was an unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment. Sadly, in the past decades, the wildlife and forests of Tibet have been almost totally destroyed by the Chinese. The effects on Tibet’s delicate environment have been devastating. What little is left in Tibet must be protected, and efforts must be made to restore the environment to its balanced state.

China uses Tibet for the production of nuclear weapons and may also have started dumping nuclear waste in Tibet. Not

only does China plan to dispose of its own nuclear waste but also that of other countries, which have already agreed to pay Peking to dispose of their toxic materials.

The dangers this presents are obvious. Not only living generations but also future generations are threatened by China's lack of concern for Tibet's unique and delicate environment.

5. Negotiations on the future status of Tibet and the relationship between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples should be started in earnest.

We wish to approach this subject in a reasonable and realistic way, in a spirit of frankness and conciliation, and with a view to finding a solution that is in the long-term interest of all: the Tibetans, the Chinese, and all other peoples concerned. Tibetans and Chinese are distinct peoples, each with their own country, history, culture, language, and way of life. Differences among peoples must be recognized and respected. They need not, however, form obstacles to genuine cooperation where this is to the mutual benefit of both peoples. It is my sincere belief that if the concerned parties were to meet and discuss their future with an open mind and a sincere desire to find a satisfactory and just solution, a breakthrough could be achieved. We must all exert ourselves to be reasonable and wise and to meet in a spirit of frankness and understanding.

Let me end on a personal note. I wish to thank you for the concern and support that you and so many of your colleagues and fellow citizens have expressed for the plight of oppressed people everywhere. The fact that you have publicly shown your sympathy for us Tibetans has already had a positive impact on the lives of our people inside Tibet. I ask for your continued support at this critical time in our country's history.

Thank you.

STRASBOURG PROPOSAL

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Address to the Members of the European Parliament Strasbourg, France

15 June 1988

We are living today in a very interdependent world. One nation's problem can no longer be solved by itself. Without a sense of universal responsibility our very survival is in danger. I have, therefore, always believed in the need for better understanding, closer co-operation, and greater respect among the various nations of the world. The European Parliament is an inspiring example. Out of the chaos of war, those who were once enemies have, in a single generation, learned to co-exist and to co-operate. I am, therefore, particularly pleased and honoured to address this gathering at the European Parliament.

As you know, my own country, Tibet, is undergoing a very difficult period. The Tibetans, particularly those who live under Chinese occupation, yearn for freedom, and justice, and a self-determined future so that they are able to fully preserve their unique identity and live in peace with their neighbours. For over a thousand years, we Tibetans have adhered to spiritual and environmental values in order to maintain the delicate balance of life across the high plateau on which we live. Inspired by Buddha's message of non-violence and compassion and protected by our mountains, we sought to respect every form of life and to abandon war as an instrument of national policy.

Our history, dating back more than two thousand years, has been one of independence. At no time, since the founding of our nation in 127 B.C., have we Tibetans conceded our sovereignty to a foreign power. As with all nations, Tibet experienced periods in which our neighbours -Mongol, Manchu, Chinese, British and the Gorkhas of Nepal - sought

to establish influence over us. These eras have been brief and the Tibetan people have never accepted them as constituting a loss of national sovereignty. In fact, there have been occasions when Tibetans rulers conquered vast areas of China and other neighbouring states. This, however, does not mean that we Tibetans can lay claim to these territories.

In 1949 the People's Republic of China forcibly invaded Tibet. Since that time, Tibet has endured the darkest period in its history. More than a million of our people have died as a result of the occupation. Thousand of monasteries were reduced to ruins. A generation has grown up deprived of education, economic opportunities and a sense of its on national character. Though the current Chinese leadership has implemented certain reforms it is also promoting a massive population transfer onto the Tibetan plateau. This policy has already reduced the six million Tibetans to a minority. Speaking for all Tibetans, I must sadly inform you, our tragedy continues.

I have always urged my people not to resort to violence in their efforts to redress their suffering. Yet I believe all people have a moral right to fully protest injustice. Unfortunately, the demonstrations in Tibet have been violently suppressed by the Chinese police and military. I will continue to counsel for non-violence, but unless China forsakes the brutal methods it employs, the Tibetans cannot be responsible for a further deterioration in the situation.

Every Tibetan hopes and prays for the full restoration of our nation's independence. Thousands of our people have sacrificed their lives, and our whole nation has suffered in this struggle. Even in recent months, Tibetans have bravely sacrificed their lives to achieve this precious goal. On the other hand, the Chinese totally fail to recognize the Tibetan

people's aspirations and continue to pursue a policy of brutal suppression.

I have thought for a long time about how to achieve a realistic solution to my nation's plight. My cabinet and I solicited the opinions of many friends and concerned people. As a result, on September 21, 1987, at the Congressional Human Rights Caucus in Washington, D.C., I announced a Five-Point Peace Plan for Tibet. In it, I called for the conversion of Tibet into a zone of peace, a sanctuary in which humanity and nature can live together in harmony. I also called for respect for human rights, democratic ideals, environmental protection, and a halt to the Chinese population transfer into Tibet.

The fifth point of the peace plan called for earnest negotiations between the Tibetans and the Chinese. We have therefore taken the initiative to formulate some thoughts that, we hope, may serve as a basis for resolving the issue of Tibet. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the distinguished gathering here of the main points of our thinking.

The whole of Tibet known as Cholka-Sum (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo) should become a self-governing democratic political entity founded on law by agreement of the people for the common good and the protection of themselves and their environment, in association with the People's Republic of China.

The Government of the People's Republic of China could remain responsible for Tibet's foreign policy. The Government of Tibet should, however, develop and maintain relations, through its own foreign affairs bureau, in the field of commerce, education, culture, religion, tourism, science, sports and other non-political activities. Tibet should join international organizations concerned with such activities.

The Government of Tibet should be founded on a constitution or basic law. The basic law should provide for a democratic system of government entrusted with the task of ensuring economic equality, social justice, and protection of the environment. This means that the Government of Tibet will have the rights to decide on all affairs relating to Tibet and the Tibetans.

As individual freedom is the real source and potential of any society's development, the government of Tibet would seek to ensure this freedom through full adherence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the rights to speech, assembly, and religion. Because religion constitutes the source of Tibet's national identity and spiritual values lie at the very heart of Tibet's rich culture, it would be the special duty of the government of Tibet to safeguard and develop its practice.

The government should be comprised of a popularly elected Chief Executive, a bi-cameral legislative branch, and an independent judicial system. Its seat should be in Lhasa.

The social and economic system of Tibet should be determined in accordance with the wishes of the Tibetan people, bearing in mind especially the need to raise the standard of living of the entire population.

The government of Tibet would pass strict laws to protect wildlife and plants. The exploitation of natural resources would be carefully regulated. The manufacture, testing, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and other armaments must be prohibited, as must the use of nuclear power and other technologies that produce hazardous waste. It would be the government of Tibet's goal to transform Tibet into our planet's largest natural preserve.

A regional peace conference should be called to ensure that Tibet becomes a genuine sanctuary of peace through demilitarization. Until such a peace conference can be convened and demilitarization and neutralization achieved, China could have the right to maintain a restricted number of military installations in Tibet. These must be solely for defence purposes.

In order to create an atmosphere of trust conducive to fruitful negotiations, the Chinese government should cease its human rights violations in Tibet and abandon its policy of transferring Chinese to Tibet.

These are thoughts we have in mind. I am aware that many Tibetans will be disappointed by the moderate stand they represent. Undoubtedly, there will be much discussion in the coming months within our own community, both in Tibet and in exile. This, however, is an essential and invaluable part of any process of change. I believe these thoughts represent the most realistic means by which to re-establish Tibet's separate identity and restore the fundamental rights of Tibetan people while accommodating China's own interests. I would like to emphasize, however, that whatever the outcome of the negotiations with the Chinese may be, the Tibetan people themselves must be the ultimate deciding authority. Therefore, any proposal will contain a comprehensive procedural plan to ascertain the wishes of the Tibetan people in a nationwide referendum.

I would like to take this opportunity to state that I do not wish to take an active part in the government of Tibet. Nevertheless, I will continue to work as much as I can for the well-being and happiness of the Tibetan people as long as it is necessary.

We are ready to present a proposal to the government of the People's Republic of China based on the thoughts I have presented. A negotiating team representing the Tibetan government has been selected. We are prepared to meet with the Chinese to discuss the details of a proposal aimed at achieving an equitable solution.

We are encouraged by the keen interest being shown in our situation by a growing number of governments and political leaders, including former President Jimmy Carter of the United States. We are encouraged by the recent changes in China, which have brought about a new group of leaders who are more pragmatic and liberal.

We urge the Chinese government and leadership to give serious and substantive consideration to the ideas I have described. Only dialogue and a willingness to look with honesty and clarity at the reality of Tibet can lead to a viable solution. We wish to conduct a discussion with the Chinese government, bearing in mind the larger interests of humanity. Our proposal will therefore be made in a spirit of conciliation, and we hope that the Chinese will respond accordingly.

My country's unique history and profound spiritual heritage render it ideally suited for fulfilling the role of a sanctuary of peace at the heart of Asia. Its historic status as a neutral buffer state, contributing to the stability of the entire continent, can be restored. Peace and security for Asia as well as for the world at large can be enhanced. In the future, Tibet will no longer be an occupied land, oppressed by force, unproductive, and scarred by suffering. It can become a free haven where humanity and nature live in harmonious balance, a creative model for the resolution of tensions afflicting many areas throughout the world.

The Chinese leadership needs to realize that colonial rule over occupied territories is anachronistic today. A large, genuine union of associations can only come about voluntarily when there is satisfactory benefit to all the parties concerned. The European Community is a clear example of this. On the other hand, even one country or community can break into two or more entities where there is a lack of trust or benefit and when force is used as the principal means of rule.

I would like to end by making a special appeal to the honourable members of the European Parliament, and through them, to their respective constituencies to extend their support to our efforts. A resolution of the Tibetan problem within the framework that we proposed will not only be for the mutual benefit of the Tibetans and Chinese people but will also contribute to regional and global peace and stability. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts with you.



STATEMENT OF HIS HOLINESS THE FOURTEENTH DALAI LAMA, TENZIN GYATSO, ON THE ISSUE OF HIS REINCARNATION

24 September 2011

Introduction

My fellow Tibetans, both in and outside Tibet, all those who follow the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and everyone who has a connection to Tibet and Tibetans: due to the foresight of our ancient kings, ministers and scholar-adepts, the complete teaching of the Buddha, comprising the scriptural and experiential teachings of the Three Vehicles and the Four Sets of Tantra and their related subjects and disciplines flourished widely in the Land of Snow. Tibet has served as a source of Buddhist and related cultural traditions for the world. In particular, it has contributed significantly to the happiness of countless beings in Asia, including those in China, Tibet and Mongolia.

In the course of upholding the Buddhist tradition in Tibet, we evolved a unique Tibetan tradition of recognizing the reincarnations of scholar-adepts that has been of immense help to both the Dharma and sentient beings, particularly to the monastic community.

Since the omniscient Gedun Gyatso was recognized and confirmed as the reincarnation of Gedun Drub in the fifteenth century and the Gaden Phodrang Labrang (the Dalai Lama's institution) was established, successive reincarnations have been recognized. The third in the line, Sonam Gyatso, was given the title of the Dalai Lama. The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, established the Gaden Phodrang Government in 1642, becoming the spiritual and political head of Tibet. For more than 600 years since Gedun Drub, a series of unmistakable reincarnations has been recognised in

the lineage of the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lamas have functioned as both the political and spiritual leaders of Tibet for 369 years since 1642. I have now voluntarily brought this to an end, proud and satisfied that we can pursue the kind of democratic system of government flourishing elsewhere in the world. In fact, as far back as 1969, I made clear that concerned people should decide whether the Dalai Lama's reincarnations should continue in the future. However, in the absence of clear guidelines, should the concerned public express a strong wish for the Dalai Lamas to continue, there is an obvious risk of vested political interests misusing the reincarnation system to fulfil their own political agenda. Therefore, while I remain physically and mentally fit, it seems important to me that we draw up clear guidelines to recognise the next Dalai Lama, so that there is no room for doubt or deception. For these guidelines to be fully comprehensible, it is essential to understand the system of Tulku recognition and the basic concepts behind it. Therefore, I shall briefly explain them below.

Past and Future Lives

In order to accept reincarnation or the reality of Tulkus, we need to accept the existence of past and future lives. Sentient beings come to this present life from their previous lives and take rebirth again after death. This kind of continuous rebirth is accepted by all the ancient Indian spiritual traditions and schools of philosophy, except the Charvakas, who were a materialist movement. Some modern thinkers deny past and future lives on the premise that we cannot see them. Others do not draw such clear cut conclusions on this basis.

Although many religious traditions accept rebirth, they differ in their views of what it is that is reborn, how it is reborn, and how it passes through the transitional period between two lives. Some religious traditions accept the prospect of future

life, but reject the idea of past lives.

Generally, Buddhists believe that there is no beginning to birth and that once we achieve liberation from the cycle of existence by overcoming our karma and destructive emotions, we will not be reborn under the sway of these conditions. Therefore, Buddhists believe that there is an end to being reborn as a result of karma and destructive emotions, but most Buddhist philosophical schools do not accept that the mind-stream comes to an end. To reject past and future rebirth would contradict the Buddhist concept of the ground, path and result, which must be explained on the basis of the disciplined or undisciplined mind. If we accept this argument, logically, we would also have to accept that the world and its inhabitants come about without causes and conditions. Therefore, as long as you are a Buddhist, it is necessary to accept past and future rebirth.

For those who remember their past lives, rebirth is a clear experience. However, most ordinary beings forget their past lives as they go through the process of death, intermediate state and rebirth. As past and future rebirths are slightly obscure to them, we need to use evidence-based logic to prove past and future rebirths to them.

There are many different logical arguments given in the words of the Buddha and subsequent commentaries to prove the existence of past and future lives. In brief, they come down to four points: the logic that things are preceded by things of a similar type, the logic that things are preceded by a substantial cause, the logic that the mind has gained familiarity with things in the past, and the logic of having gained experience of things in the past.

Ultimately all these arguments are based on the idea that the nature of the mind, its clarity and awareness, must have

clarity and awareness as its substantial cause. It cannot have any other entity such as an inanimate object as its substantial cause. This is self-evident. Through logical analysis we infer that a new stream of clarity and awareness cannot come about without causes or from unrelated causes. While we observe that mind cannot be produced in a laboratory, we also infer that nothing can eliminate the continuity of subtle clarity and awareness.

As far as I know, no modern psychologist, physicist, or neuroscientist has been able to observe or predict the production of mind either from matter or without cause.

There are people who can remember their immediate past life or even many past lives, as well as being able to recognise places and relatives from those lives. This is not just something that happened in the past. Even today there are many people in the East and West, who can recall incidents and experiences from their past lives. Denying this is not an honest and impartial way of doing research, because it runs counter to this evidence. The Tibetan system of recognising reincarnations is an authentic mode of investigation based on people's recollection of their past lives.

How Rebirth Takes Place

There are two ways in which someone can take rebirth after death: rebirth under the sway of karma and destructive emotions and rebirth through the power of compassion and prayer. Regarding the first, due to ignorance negative and positive karma are created and their imprints remain on the consciousness. These are reactivated through craving and grasping, propelling us into the next life. We then take rebirth involuntarily in higher or lower realms. This is the way ordinary beings circle incessantly through existence like the turning of a wheel. Even under such circumstances ordinary beings can engage diligently with a positive aspiration in virtuous

practices in their day-to-day lives. They familiarise themselves with virtue that at the time of death can be reactivated providing the means for them to take rebirth in a higher realm of existence. On the other hand, superior Bodhisattvas, who have attained the path of seeing, are not reborn through the force of their karma and destructive emotions, but due to the power of their compassion for sentient beings and based on their prayers to benefit others. They are able to choose their place and time of birth as well as their future parents. Such a rebirth, which is solely for the benefit of others, is rebirth through the force of compassion and prayer.

The Meaning of Tulku

It seems the Tibetan custom of applying the epithet 'Tulku' (Buddha's Emanation Body) to recognized reincarnations began when devotees used it as an honorary title, but it has since become a common expression. In general, the term Tulku refers to a particular aspect of the Buddha, one of the three or four described in the Sutra Vehicle. According to this explanation of these aspects of the Buddha, a person who is totally bound by destructive emotions and karma has the potential to achieve the Truth Body (Dharmakaya), comprising the Wisdom Truth Body and Nature Truth Body. The former refers to the enlightened mind of a Buddha, which sees everything directly and precisely, as it is, in an instant. It has been cleared of all destructive emotions, as well as their imprints, through the accumulation of merit and wisdom over a long period of time. The latter, the Nature Truth Body, refers to the empty nature of that all-knowing enlightened mind. These two together are aspects of the Buddhas for themselves. However, as they are not directly accessible to others, but only amongst the Buddhas themselves, it is imperative that the Buddhas manifest in physical forms that are accessible to sentient beings in order to help them. Hence, the ultimate physical aspect of a Buddha is the Body of Complete Enjoyment (Sambhogakaya), which is accessible

to superior Bodhisattvas, and has five definite qualifications such as residing in the Akanishta Heaven. And from the Body of Complete Enjoyment are manifested the myriad Emanation Bodies or Tulkus (Nirmanakaya), of the Buddhas, which appear as gods or humans and are accessible even to ordinary beings. These two physical aspects of the Buddha are termed Form Bodies, which are meant for others.

The Emanation Body is three-fold: a) the Supreme Emanation Body like Shakyamuni Buddha, the historical Buddha, who manifested the twelve deeds of a Buddha such as being born in the place he chose and so forth; b) the Artistic Emanation Body which serves others by appearing as craftsmen, artists and so on; and c) the Incarnate Emanation Body, according to which Buddhas appear in various forms such as human beings, deities, rivers, bridges, medicinal plants, and trees to help sentient beings. Of these three types of Emanation Body, the reincarnations of spiritual masters recognized and known as 'Tulkus' in Tibet come under the third category. Among these Tulkus there may be many who are truly qualified Incarnate Emanation Bodies of the Buddhas, but this does not necessarily apply to all of them. Amongst the Tulkus of Tibet there may be those who are reincarnations of superior Bodhisattvas, Bodhisattvas on the paths of accumulation and preparation, as well as masters who are evidently yet to enter these Bodhisattva paths. Therefore, the title of Tulku is given to reincarnate Lamas either on the grounds of their resembling enlightened beings or through their connection to certain qualities of enlightened beings.

As Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo said:

“Reincarnation is what happens when someone takes rebirth after the predecessor’s passing away; emanation is when manifestations take place without the source’s passing away.”

Recognition of Reincarnations

The practice of recognizing who is who by identifying someone's previous life occurred even when Shakyamuni Buddha himself was alive. Many accounts are found in the four Agama Sections of the Vinaya Pitaka, the Jataka Stories, the Sutra of the Wise and Foolish, the Sutra of One Hundred Karmas and so on, in which the Tathagata revealed the workings of karma, recounting innumerable stories about how the effects of certain karmas created in a past life are experienced by a person in his or her present life. Also, in the life stories of Indian masters, who lived after the Buddha, many reveal their previous places of birth. There are many such stories, but the system of recognizing and numbering their reincarnations did not occur in India.

The System of Recognizing Reincarnations in Tibet

Past and future lives were asserted in the indigenous Tibetan Bon tradition before the arrival of Buddhism. And since the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, virtually all Tibetans have believed in past and future lives. Investigating the reincarnations of many spiritual masters who upheld the Dharma, as well as the custom of praying devotedly to them, flourished everywhere in Tibet. Many authentic scriptures, indigenous Tibetan books such as the Mani Kabum and the Fivefold Kathang Teachings and others like the The Books of Kadam Disciples and the Jewel Garland: Responses to Queries, which were recounted by the glorious, incomparable Indian master Dipankara Atisha in the 11th century in Tibet, tell stories of the reincarnations of Arya Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of compassion. However, the present tradition of formally recognizing the reincarnations of masters first began in the early 13th century with the recognition of Karmapa Pagshi as the reincarnation of Karmapa Dusum Khyenpa by his disciples in accordance with his prediction. Since then, there have been seventeen Karmapa incarnations over more than nine hundred years. Similarly, since the recognition of Kunga Sangmo as the

reincarnation of Khandro Choekyi Dronme in the 15th century there have been more than ten incarnations of Samding Dorje Phagmo. So, among the Tulkus recognized in Tibet there are monastics and lay tantric practitioners, male and female. This system of recognizing the reincarnations gradually spread to other Tibetan Buddhist traditions, and Bon, in Tibet. Today, there are recognized Tulkus in all the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Sakya, Geluk, Kagyu and Nyingma, as well as Jonang and Bodong, who serve the Dharma. It is also evident that amongst these Tulkus some are a disgrace.

The omniscient Gedun Drub, who was a direct disciple of Je Tsongkhapa, founded Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Tsang and took care of his students. He passed away in 1474 at the age of 84. Although initially no efforts were made to identify his reincarnation, people were obliged to recognize a child named Sangye Chophel, who had been born in Tanak, Tsang (1476), because of what he had to say about his amazing and flawless recollections of his past life. Since then, a tradition began of searching for and recognizing the successive reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas by the Gaden Phodrang Labrang and later the Gaden Phodrang Government.

The Ways of Recognizing Reincarnations

After the system of recognizing Tulkus came into being, various procedures for going about it began to develop and grow. Among these some of the most important involve the predecessor's predictive letter and other instructions and indications that might occur; the reincarnation's reliably recounting his previous life and speaking about it; identifying possessions belonging to the predecessor and recognizing people who had been close to him. Apart from these, additional methods include asking reliable spiritual masters for their divination as well as seeking the predictions of mundane oracles, who appear through mediums in trance,

and observing the visions that manifest in sacred lakes of protectors like Lhamoi Latso, a sacred lake south of Lhasa.

When there happens to be more than one prospective candidate for recognition as a Tulku, and it becomes difficult to decide, there is a practice of making the final decision by divination employing the dough-ball method (zen tak) before a sacred image while calling upon the power of truth.

Emanation before the Passing away of the Predecessor (ma-dhey tulku)

Usually a reincarnation has to be someone's taking rebirth as a human being after previously passing away. Ordinary sentient beings generally cannot manifest an emanation before death (ma-dhey tulku), but superior Bodhisattvas, who can manifest themselves in hundreds or thousands of bodies simultaneously, can manifest an emanation before death. Within the Tibetan system of recognizing Tulkus there are emanations who belong to the same mind-stream as the predecessor, emanations who are connected to others through the power of karma and prayers, and emanations who come as a result of blessings and appointment.

The main purpose of the appearance of a reincarnation is to continue the predecessor's unfinished work to serve Dharma and beings. In the case of a Lama who is an ordinary being, instead of having a reincarnation belonging to the same mind-stream, someone else with connections to that Lama through pure karma and prayers may be recognized as his or her emanation. Alternatively it is possible for the Lama to appoint a successor who is either his disciple or someone young who is to be recognized as his emanation. Since these options are possible in the case of an ordinary being, an emanation before death that is not of the same mind-stream is feasible. In some cases one high Lama may have several reincarnations simultaneously, such as incarnations of body,

speech and mind and so on. In recent times, there have been well-known emanations before death such as Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje and Chogye Trichen Ngawang Khyenrab.

Using the Golden Urn

As the degenerate age gets worse, and as more reincarnations of high Lamas are being recognized, some of them for political motives, increasing numbers have been recognized through inappropriate and questionable means, as a result of which huge damage has been done to the Dharma.

During the conflict between Tibet and the Gurkhas (1791-93) the Tibetan Government had to call on Manchu military support. Consequently the Gurkha military was expelled from Tibet, but afterwards Manchu officials made a 29-point proposal on the pretext of making the Tibetan Government's administration more efficient. This proposal included the suggestion of picking lots from a Golden Urn to decide on the recognition of the reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas, Panchen Lamas and Hutuktus, a Mongolian title given to high Lamas. Therefore, this procedure was followed in the case of recognizing some reincarnations of the Dalai Lama, Panchen Lama and other high Lamas. The ritual to be followed was written by the Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso. Even after such a system had been introduced, this procedure was dispensed with for the Ninth, Thirteenth and myself, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.

Even in the case of the Tenth Dalai Lama, the authentic reincarnation had already been found and in reality this procedure was not followed, but in order to humour the Manchus it was merely announced that this procedure had been observed.

The Golden Urn system was actually used only in the cases of the Eleventh and Twelfth Dalai Lamas. However, the

Twelfth Dalai Lama had already been recognized before the procedure was employed. Therefore, there has only been one occasion when a Dalai Lama was recognized by using this method. Likewise, among the reincarnations of the Panchen Lama, apart from the Eighth and the Ninth, there have been no instances of this method being employed. This system was imposed by the Manchus, but Tibetans had no faith in it because it lacked any spiritual quality. However, if it were to be used honestly, it seems that we could consider it as similar to the manner of divination employing the dough-ball method (zen tak).

In 1880, during the recognition of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the Twelfth, traces of the Priest-Patron relationship between Tibet and the Manchus still existed. He was recognized as the unmistakable reincarnation by the Eighth Panchen Lama, the predictions of the Nechung and Samye oracles and by observing visions that appeared in Lhamoi Latso, therefore the Golden Urn procedure was not followed. This can be clearly understood from the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's final testament of the Water-Monkey Year (1933) in which he states:

“As you all know, I was selected not in the customary way of picking lots from the golden urn, but my selection was foretold and divined. In accordance with these divinations and prophecies I was recognized as the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and enthroned.”

When I was recognized as the Fourteenth incarnation of the Dalai Lama in 1939, the Priest-Patron relationship between Tibet and China had already come to an end. Therefore, there was no question of any need to confirm the reincarnation by employing the Golden Urn. It is well-known that the then Regent of Tibet and the Tibetan National Assembly had followed the procedure for recognizing the Dalai Lama's reincarnation taking account of the predictions of high Lamas,

oracles and the visions seen in Lhamoi Latso; the Chinese had no involvement in it whatever. Nevertheless, some concerned officials of the Guomintang later cunningly spread lies in the newspapers claiming that they had agreed to forego the use of the Golden Urn and that Wu Chung-tsin presided over my enthronement, and so on. This lie was exposed by Ngabo Ngawang Jigme, the Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, who the People's Republic of China considered to be a most progressive person, at the Second Session of the Fifth People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region (31st July 1989). This is clear, when, at the end of his speech, in which he gave a detailed explanation of events and presented documentary evidence, he demanded, "What need is there for the Communist Party to follow suit and continue the lies of the Guomintang?"

Deceptive Strategy and False Hopes

In the recent past, there have been cases of irresponsible managers of wealthy Lama-estates who indulged in improper methods to recognize reincarnations, which have undermined the Dharma, the monastic community and our society. Moreover, since the Manchu era Chinese political authorities repeatedly engaged in various deceitful means using Buddhism, Buddhist masters and Tulkus as tools to fulfil their political ends as they involved themselves in Tibetan and Mongolian affairs. Today, the authoritarian rulers of the People's Republic of China, who as communists reject religion, but still involve themselves in religious affairs, have imposed a so-called re-education campaign and declared the so-called Order No. Five, concerning the control and recognition of reincarnations, which came into force on 1st September 2007. This is outrageous and disgraceful. The enforcement of various inappropriate methods for recognizing reincarnations to eradicate our unique Tibetan cultural traditions is doing damage that will be difficult to repair.

Moreover, they say they are waiting for my death and will recognize a Fifteenth Dalai Lama of their choice. It is clear from their recent rules and regulations and subsequent declarations that they have a detailed strategy to deceive Tibetans, followers of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and the world community. Therefore, as I have a responsibility to protect the Dharma and sentient beings and counter such detrimental schemes, I make the following declaration.

The Next Incarnation of the Dalai Lama

As I mentioned earlier, reincarnation is a phenomenon which should take place either through the voluntary choice of the concerned person or at least on the strength of his or her karma, merit and prayers. Therefore, the person who reincarnates has sole legitimate authority over where and how he or she takes rebirth and how that reincarnation is to be recognized. It is a reality that no one else can force the person concerned, or manipulate him or her. It is particularly inappropriate for Chinese communists, who explicitly reject even the idea of past and future lives, let alone the concept of reincarnate Tulkus, to meddle in the system of reincarnation and especially the reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas. Such brazen meddling contradicts their own political ideology and reveals their double standards. Should this situation continue in the future, it will be impossible for Tibetans and those who follow the Tibetan Buddhist tradition to acknowledge or accept it.

When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, and re-evaluate whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue or not. On that basis we will take a decision. If it is decided that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue and there is a need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognized, responsibility for doing so will primarily

rest on the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should seek advice and direction from these concerned beings and carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition. I shall leave clear written instructions about this. Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognized through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Dharamshala

Note: Translated from the Original Tibetan

“The passing generations of Tibetans in Tibet have carried the Tibetan movement with their indomitable spirit and the responsibility now befalls the Tibetan youths in exile carrying forward the baton.”

-His Holiness the Great 14th Dalai Lama