

# TIBET DIGEST

FEBRUARY 2024

FOUNDATION FOR  
**Non-violent  
Alternatives**  
To inform and shape policy on Tibet and the region



## FOUNDATION FOR NON-VIOLENT ALTERNATIVES (FNVA)

Tibet Digest is a Monthly publication brought out by FNVA containing relevant news pertaining to Tibet, Chinese politics, Sino Indian relations that appear mostly but not restricted to the Chinese state media.

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## China's Tibet Policy

Exclusive: Chinese authorities release dozens of Tibetans arrested for dam protests

27 February 2024, [RFA](#)



*Tibetans (L) opposed to the dam project plead with Chinese officials in Dege county, southwestern China's Sichuan province, Feb. 21, 2024. At right, protesters in New York demonstrate against the project in New York City, Feb. 24, 2024.*

Around 40 Tibetans have been released from among more than 1,000 people arrested by Chinese police for protesting a dam project that could submerge ancient monasteries in a Tibetan-populated township of southwestern China's Sichuan province, sources from inside Tibet told Radio Free Asia.

Chinese authorities released about 20 monks each on Monday and Tuesday, said the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

They were among a large group of monks arrested from Wonto Monastery, the sources said. However, after their release, authorities imposed strict restrictions on their contact with the outside world, the sources added.

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On Feb. 23, police arrested more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks and residents, of Dege county in Sichuan's Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture, who had been peacefully protesting the construction of the Gangtuo Dam.

If built, the structure could submerge monasteries in Dege's Wangbuding township and force residents of at least two villages near the Drichu River to relocate, sources told RFA.

The fate of the monasteries on both sides of the Drichu, or Jinsha in Chinese, has been at the center of the protests staged since Feb. 14 by Buddhist monks and local Tibetans, who have expressed distress at the expected destruction of the centuries-old religious institutions, including Wonto Monastery, which dates back to the 13th century.

"One of the main reasons for the release of the Tibetans is the growing media coverage abroad of the mass arrests that have taken place," one source told RFA.

Some of the arrested Tibetans were beaten during the interrogations and later had to be admitted to the hospital. They were also informed individually at the hospital that they would be allowed to return to the monasteries on Wednesday, the same source said.

But authorities forbade them to communicate with outsiders, the sources said.

After the arrest of a number of monks from Wonto on Feb. 22 and Feb. 23, authorities prohibited all religious activities within the monastery, a second source said.

Chinese police have also imposed strict restrictions on the movement of monks to and from the various monasteries located on both sides of the Drichu River, the same person said.

### Monastery murals



Besides the Wonto Monastery, the Yena and Khardho monasteries in Wangbuding on the east bank of the Drichu River and the Rabten, Gonsar, Tashi and Pharok monasteries in the Tibetan Autonomous Region on the west bank of the river may be affected by the building of the dam.

At China's 8th International Academic Symposium on Tibetan Archaeology and Art in Hangzhou in December 2023, postgraduate student Yao Ruiyi warned in a study that the hydropower station "will cause greater difficulties in the subsequent preservation and research of the Wangdui Temple murals," using another name for the Wonto Monastery.

"Therefore, the research and protection of Wangdui Temple murals is urgent," the study said.

The Gangtuo Dam is part of a plan that China's National Development and Reform Commission announced in 2012 to build a massive 13-tier hydropower complex on the Drichu. It would be located at Wontok (or Gangtuo, in Chinese) in Dege county, northwest of Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The total planned capacity of the 13 hydropower stations is 13,920 megawatts.

#### **Foreign outcry**

Representatives of the U.S. and Canadian governments as well as global rights groups and Tibetan advocacy groups have condemned China's arrest of the 1,000 dam protesters, calling for the immediate release of those detained and for the preservation of the cultural, religious and linguistic identity of Tibetans.

In a post to the social media network X on Monday, the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China condemned "the reported violent repression of peaceful protests against the planned destruction of 2 villages and 6 monasteries by a hydropower dam project," referring to RFA's report on the mass arrests.

"Those detained must be released and the PRC must protect the cultural heritage of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries," the Commission said, referring to the People's Republic of China.

A day earlier, Uzra Zeya, the U.S. under secretary for civilian security, democracy and human rights and U.S. special coordinator for Tibetan Issues, also posted a message to X noting that the centuries-old monasteries "are home to hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist monks and contain irreplaceable cultural relics."

"The U.S. stands with Tibetans in preserving their unique cultural, religious, and linguistic identity," she wrote.

RFA reported on Feb. 14 that at least 300 Tibetans gathered outside Dege County Town Hall to protest the building of the Gangtuo Dam.

Tibetans in exile have been holding mass demonstrations in various parts of the world, including Dharamsala, India – home to the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama – and New York, Zurich and Toronto.

[Tibetans protesting against dam construction face violence and detention](#)

26 February 2024, [Phayul](#)

Chinese police in Kham Dege have reportedly been conducting harsh interrogations of Tibetans who were detained for protesting against a dam project, with some subjected to severe beatings requiring medical attention, according to sources cited by *Radio Free Asia*.

The protests, involving Buddhist monks and residents from Wangbuding township in Dege County, Kardze in Tibet, began on Friday. The detainees, who have been peacefully protesting since February 14 against the proposed construction of the Gangtuo hydropower dam on the Drichu River, have faced harsh treatment from authorities.

Sources speaking to RFA revealed that detainees were "slapped and beaten severely each time they refused to answer important questions, Many had to be taken to the hospital." Among those affected was a monk from the Wonto Monastery who suffered severe injuries resulting in him unable to speak and bearing numerous bruises on his body.

Many of the arrested Tibetans are being held in different locations throughout Dege County,



including police stations in upper Dege and an old prison, as there is no single facility capable of accommodating more than 1,000 individuals who are currently detained.

Reports indicate that detainees have been deprived of food, leading to several individuals passing out due to the lack of sustenance, particularly in the freezing temperatures. “In these detention centres, the arrested Tibetans were not given any food, save for some hot water, and many passed out because of the lack of food amid the freezing temperatures,” a source told RFA.

Furthermore, detainees were instructed to bring their own bedding and tsampa or barley, a Tibetan staple, indicating that their release is not imminent. “Each of the police units brought in from outside Dege have been tasked with controlling a community each and for carrying out strict surveillance and suppression of the people there,” a source told RFA.

“In the communities of Wonto and Yena, people have been restricted from leaving their homes and the restrictions are so severe that it is similar to what happened during the Covid-19 outbreak when the entire place was under lockdown,” said the same source.

Reports indicate that the authorities in Dege County have taken drastic measures to control the flow of information and suppress dissent. It has been reported that internet and phone lines have been severed, and individuals have had their phones confiscated forcibly. Additionally, there are allegations of spies being deployed among the populace to prevent the dissemination of information about the events unfolding in the region.

US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Uzra Zeya posted on her official X (formerly known as Twitter) account wrote, “Deeply concerned by reports of the PRC’s mass arrests of Tibetans protesting construction of a dam that threatens displacement of villages & destruction of monasteries. China must respect human rights & freedom of expression and include Tibetans in the development & implementation of water and land management policies”.

Despite protests against dam construction in Tibet, Beijing is proceeding with its plans

26 February 2024, [Asia News](#)

*Tibetan monks who took to the streets against Chinese authorities were arrested and mistreated in detention. Plans to build a hydroelectric power plant would see two villages and six monasteries submerged, which is why Beijing has issued an order to relocate residents, which the latter are resisting.*

Dharamsala (AsiaNews) – Chinese police have begun questioning Tibetans arrested over the weekend for protesting the construction of a dam in Dege county, Sichuan province, on the border with Tibet.

Those taken into custody are being held at various locations in Dege County as no single site could detain more than a thousand individuals at once.

A source that spoke to *Radio Free Asia (RFA)* on condition of anonymity for personal safety said that the detainees were “slapped and beaten severely each time they refused to answer important questions,” while “Many had to be taken to the hospital.”

Another source added that some prisoners “passed out because of the lack of food amid the freezing temperatures.”

For their part, Chinese authorities imposed COVID-19-like restrictions, banning people from leaving their homes.

Local monks and residents began to protest peacefully on 14 February, after receiving a forced relocation order from Beijing due to the construction of the Gangtok (Kamtok in Tibetan) hydroelectric power plant.

For the project to be completed, the villages of Upper Wonto and Shipa, home to about 2,000 Tibetans, and six monasteries – three in Dege County and three in Chamdo (Changdu) township, must be demolished before they are submerged by water.

Several videos posted online show the monks prostrating themselves before Chinese officials (a gesture that Tibetans consider “awful”), urging them to review the decision and stop the demolition of their places of worship.

In particular, the monasteries in Wonto (which contain precious painted walls dating back to the 13th century) and Yena, the closest to the construction site, are home to about 300 monks and carry important religious and cultural value for local Tibetans.

Beijing, however, seems unwilling to stop the project.

The 2,240-megawatt Gangtuo (Kamtok) hydroelectric power plant is located along the upper Yangtze River (Drichu in Tibetan and Jinsha in Chinese).

It is part of a broader plan by the National Development and Reform Commission to build dozens of the world's largest hydroelectric stations in the Three Parallel Rivers (Yangtze, Mekong, Salween) protected area in Sichuan, Yunnan, and Tibet, where they originate.

The area, which has long been targeted by China for clean energy production, is also a UNESCO Natural World Heritage Site.

According to Tibet advocacy groups, Beijing approved the construction of the dams while sending partial information to the UN agency about possible environmental damage.

Complaints by the local population and environmental activists seem to fall on deaf ears; in early December 2023, China announced that it had completed 50 per cent of the construction of the Yebatan dam, just south of the Gangtuo dam.

According to the Chinese government, the plant, in which Beijing has invested more than 33 billion yuan (US\$ 4.6 billion), will be operational by the end of 2025 and will serve the region's social and economic development.

China's Panchen gets an earful on perfecting his role to help Sinicize Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism  
25 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

(TibetanReview.net, Feb25'24) – China's politburo leader on ethnic minority and religious affairs has on Feb 21 met with its replacement 11th Panchen Lama Gyaincain Norbu in Beijing and called on him to step up in carrying out his role to help assimilate Tibet and its religion in the mould of Xi Jinping

Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era.

Shi Taifeng, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, extended greetings for the Spring Festival and the Tibetan New Year to "Panchen Rinpoche" and all Tibetan Buddhism believers in the meeting, reported China's official Xinhua news agency Feb 21.

While acknowledging the achievements made by "Panchen Rinpoche" over the past year, Shi expressed the hope that the former could conscientiously study Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, and maintain a high degree of unity with the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core ideologically, politically and in action, the report said.

Shi has also expressed hope that the "Panchen Rinpoche" could uphold the principle of developing Tibetan Buddhism in the Chinese context, and actively contribute to advancing the adaptation of Tibetan Buddhism to the socialist society.

In his turn, the "Panchen Rinpoche" has said he would continue to improve political standards and religious knowledge, inherit and carry forward the patriotic and religious tradition of the Tibetan Buddhist community, and resolutely safeguard national unity and ethnic solidarity.

But Gyaincain Norbu's status as the "Panchen Lama" remains controversial at best. He is not recognized by mainstream Tibetan Buddhists as he was recognized under the supervision and control of the atheist, even anti-religious CPC and installed by it months after kidnapping and disappearing the 6-year-old candidate Gedhun Choekyi Nyima who had already been recognized and proclaimed by Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, in 1995. His fate or whereabouts have continued to remain unknown to this day.

Gyaincain Norbu lives in Beijing, although the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse City of Tibet is supposed to be his seat monastery.

Buddhist monks among 100 held in China over dam protests

24 February 2024, [Arunachal Times](#)

Chinese security officials have arrested more than 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks and local people in the southwestern Sichuan province to quell protests against the construction of a massive dam that would submerge six Buddhist monasteries and force the relocation of two villages, a media report said. In a rare act of defiance, residents have taken to the streets of Wangbuding township of Dege County in the Garze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture since 14 February to oppose the plan to build the 2,240-megawatt Gangtuo hydropower station on the Drichu river (Jinsha in Chinese).

The dam is located on the upper reaches of the Yangtze river, one of China's most important waterways, Radio Free Asia reported on Thursday.

The protests started on 14 February, when at least 300 Tibetans gathered outside the Dege county town hall to oppose the dam's construction, defying strict controls on public gatherings and extensive surveillance by authorities in Sichuan and Tibet regions. The detentions reportedly occurred in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, an area with a large population of ethnic Tibetans.

Some of the arrested protesters required hospitalisation due to rough treatment, the report said.

Police used water cannons, pepper spray and tasers to subdue the protesters. Videos of protests showed monks prostrating before the officials, pleading with them not to resort to demolition when they inspected Yena and Wonto monasteries in preparation for their destruction.

The USD 4.6 billion Yebatan hydropower station, the largest hydropower project in the upper reaches of the Jinsha river, exceeded 100 metres in December last year, achieving a major milestone, state-run 'Global Times' reported earlier.

The total installed capacity of the power station is expected to reach 2,240 megawatts after completion, with a maximum dam height of 217 metres. It is the tallest hyperbolic arch dam project under construction in China, according to the report. The protesting locals were particularly distraught over the construction of the hydroelectric dam, as it would destroy six monasteries, including the Wonto monastery, which includes ancient murals that date to the 13th century, the RFA report said. Videos by citizens on the protests show Chinese officials dressed in black forcibly restraining monks, who can be heard protesting against the dam. The construction of the Gangtuo hydropower dam will force the resettlement of Upper Wonto and Shipa villages, the Yena, Wonto and Khardho monasteries in Dege county, and the Rabten, Gonsar and Tashi monasteries in Chamdo township, the RFA report said. The Wonto and Yena monasteries, located closest to the site of the planned project, together have about 300 monks and hold significant cultural and religious importance to the locals. The Wonto monastery was severely damaged during China's Cultural Revolution. However, locals preserved its ancient murals and began rebuilding the monastery in 1983. The number of monks who live and worship at the four other monasteries slated for destruction is not known, the report said. About 2,000 people live in the two villages, and would be forced to relocate due to the dam project.

When asked about the protests at a media briefing here on Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning declined to comment on the report, saying that she was not aware of the incident and it was not a diplomatic question.

Perched in the Himalayas, Tibet, also known as the Roof of the World, is the origin of some of the biggest rivers in the world, including the Brahmaputra, Indus, Sutlej, Yangtse, Mekong, and Yellow rivers.

In recent years, China has stepped up efforts to build massive hydropower projects in the Tibet Autonomous Region. It is also building the world's biggest hydroelectric dam over the Brahmaputra river in Tibet, close to the Arunachal Pradesh border. The dam, which one Chinese official said has "no parallel in history," is being built in Medog county of Tibet, where the Brahmaputra Grand Canyon is located. Medog is the last county in Tibet.

India and Bangladesh, the lower riparian states, have raised concerns over the dams on the Brahmaputra, known in Tibet as Yarlung Tsangpo. (PTI)

[China's biometric surveillance in Tibet matures to integration projects](#)

23 February 2024, [Rtv](#)

The Chinese government in Tibet is linking the various biometric surveillance systems and databases. It's the next logical step after deploying so many of the systems to maintain control of the region.

It's unlikely that remote and sparsely populated Tibet is monitored in the same blanket fashion as China's Xinjiang region, but according to a new report what information has been collected is being tied into numerous biometric and other databases controlled by the autocratic government in Beijing.

The report was created by two public policy organizations that advocate for Tibet's restored independence – Turquoise Roof and Tibet Watch.

They say the Chinese government has, since 2021, required Tibetans to install the National Anti-Fraud Centre app, which government officials say has attack-prevention and -reporting functions.

Police reportedly have set up roadblocks and force travelers to download and enroll the app right there using facial recognition.

According to the report, the government has made downloading the software a legal requirement. Officials allege that they are only trying to reduce internet fraud in a region with

a 2022 gross domestic product of US\$29.7 billion.

The authors report interviewing Tibetan sources and nationals arriving in India as refugees. They also had access to "big data generated from official government sources, mobile digital forensics in the context of contemporary Tibet, and in-depth analysis of surveillance System Description Documents."

In other sections of the report, the authors refer to and quote an unnamed "Tibetan refugee" from the Golog areas. It's unclear how many refugees were interviewed.

They say they conducted a "dynamic analysis" of the anti-fraud app on Windows and Android devices and found that data collected by the software "could extend beyond internet fraud detection." The app is capable of linking to "broader control mechanisms."

More broadly in Tibet, according to the report, Beijing has integrated "AI-driven systems fusing facial recognition with internet browsing and app-based monitoring" to DNA and GIS tracking data.

For example, there is the "'Tibet Underworld Criminal Integrated Intelligence Application Platform', a sophisticated big data policing platform." Researchers reportedly analyzed procurement notices to find that it "amalgamates data from various existing Public Security Bureau systems in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) into a central Oracle database."

The authors say there are reports that people accessing offshore financial companies with their phones are picked up for an investigation.

[Gonpo Kyi stages sit-in outside court for justice for imprisoned brother](#)

21 February 2024, [International Campaign For Tibet](#)

Undeterred by multiple detentions, police manhandling and other forms of cruel treatment, Gonpo Kyi staged a sit-in again on Feb. 20, 2024 in front of the Higher People's Court of the Tibet Autonomous Region in Lhasa, seeking justice for her brother, Dorjee

Tashi, who is serving a life sentence in Drapchi Prison.

After their last protest in front of the same court, Gonpo and her husband, Choekyong, were taken into detention on Dec. 13, 2023. Gonpo was released after around eight days of detention, while her husband was released after five days.

Unconfirmed reports indicate that the authorities of Lhasa had been attempting to expel Gonpo and her husband from Lhasa back to their native hometown of Labrang (Chinese: Xiahe) in Gansu Province to prevent them from staging further protests in front of the Higher People's Court.

In the latest video clip obtained by the International Campaign for Tibet, Gonpo can be seen sitting in front of the gate of the Higher People's Court on Feb. 20, holding a flyer and a portrait of Chinese leader Xi Jinping. In the clip, the flyer written in Chinese that Gonpo holds in her right hand reads: "Dorjee Tashi has not committed any crime." She also holds a portrait of President Xi Jinping in her lap supported by her left hand. The videographer states that the date of the video is Feb. 20, and the location is the Higher People's Court of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Compared to her previous sit-ins, Gonpo holding a large portrait of Xi Jinping is a new tactic, presumably indicating she's appealing for intervention from China's top leader in accordance with the constitution to defend justice. Holding a portrait of Xi is also tactical as a safeguard against the police and officials forcibly removing her from the spot and putting her into detention again.

The International Campaign for Tibet will continue to monitor the status of Gonpo Kyi.

### **Dorjee Tashi**

ICT has previously documented the torture of the renowned Tibetan businessman and philanthropist Dorjee Tashi during his pre-trial detention, as well as his family's tireless advocacy for justice.

Both the United States and the European Union have raised concerns about the arbitrary detention of Dorjee Tashi. Notably, the

European Union called for his immediate and unconditional release, along with the release of others, during its statement on the occasion of International Human Rights Day, Dec. 10.

The United States also acknowledged the detention of Dorjee Tashi in its 2022 and 2021 State Department Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.

[Read ICT's past coverage of Dorjee Tashi's imprisonment and his sister Gonpo Kyi's activism for justice.](#)

[Unprecedented Tibetan Protest Against Hydropower Station in Sichuan](#)

19 February 2024, [Bitter Winter](#)

The construction of Gangtuo Power Plant compels thousands of Tibetans to relocate. It is about money but also contributes to destroying Tibetan culture and religion.

Something unusual and largely unprecedented took place on February 14 in Derge (Ch. Gengqing), the county seat of Dêgê County, part of the Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in Sichuan Province. Hundreds of Tibetans gathered to protest and tried to block the entrance of the Dêgê County Government building, clashing with the police. There are also unconfirmed reports of arrests.

Derge is a Tibetan city and a renowned center of Tibetan religion and culture. It is part of Kham, one of the areas of historical Tibet that the Chinese did not include in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) but added to another province, in this case Sichuan.

While the Tibetans of Kham would have ample reasons to protest against the destruction of their language, culture, and religion, what moved them to risk their liberty with an unauthorized demonstration was the refusal of the Chinese authorities to open a dialogue with the local population about Beijing's hydropower stations plan.

China is building between Sichuan and Tibet the largest hydropower system in the People's Republic and one of the largest in the world. A key part of this project is Gangtuo Power Plant, part of a 25-dams system on the Drichu (Ch.



Jingsa) River, i.e., the upper stretches of the Yangtze River.

The dams are a huge multi-billion-dollar business, but apart from their controversial ecological impact, they come with a huge human cost for the local populace. Necessarily, villages are flooded and the population should be relocated. Old buildings, including monasteries and temples, are submerged and destroyed. Those who do not want to be relocated elsewhere organized the protest in Derge.

“Relocation here,” according to the words of a local villager that were reported to a “Bitter Winter” correspondent, “does not mean that you are transferred to another nice village ready to welcome you. We are told that we will have apartments but they are not ready. Meanwhile, we are parked in camps that are kept under strict surveillance to prevent protest and are very similar to reeducation camps—although we have committed no crime.”

Some villagers do not believe that the purposes of the dam project are simply about economy. In the words of one village leader that were reported to a “Bitter Winter” correspondent, “Of course it is about making money, and big money at that, but I am sure there is more. Tibetans compelled to relocate are separated from their history, from homes where their families may have lived for decades or even centuries, from all their visible cultural and religious points of reference. It is yet another way of destroying Tibetan identity in Kham.”

Thanks to the X account of exiled Tibetan Sakar Tashi, videos of the protest were released and spread internationally (although they were quickly banned from Weibo in China). The independent YouTube channel “Yesterday” by citizen journalist Lu Yuyu, now living in exile in Canada after having served time in jail in China, also offered images of the protests.

Report claims Chinese authorities spying on exiled Tibetans

18 February 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRS) released a report, followed by an organisation based in the North Indian hill town of Dharamshala, revealing Chinese authorities' surveillance of exile Tibetans to collect personal information. While speaking to ANI, TCHRD's spokesperson, Tenzin Dawa, remarked that the whole process of the report took about two years, and they have tried to get in touch with around one hundred Tibetan people.

She further added, "The report is a collection of first-hand testimony collected from Tibetans from the diaspora who have been affected by transnational repression."

"We also have another section of secondary data that is a compilation of all existing articles or information that is publicly available in the news or media outlets," she added. "China uses the spying data to infiltrate and undermine diaspora networks, potentially through disinformation campaigns and even as a basis for blackmail," she said while speaking to ANI.

Dawa Tsering further said, "The spying aspects are just one part of the findings of our report so the report that we have just released is actually one of the first to focus on the transnational repression led by the CCP on the Tibetan diaspora communities."

"In the international communities, there have been a lot of discussions on the kind of repression that's being faced transnationally by the so-called Chinese overseas, including the Uyghurs, Hongkongers, and Taiwanese, but there has been no sort of report dedicated to the kind of repression that the Tibetans in diaspora have been facing for so long," TCHRD's spokesperson added. As per the report, the TCHRD's spokesperson said, "TCHRD felt the need to first of all document these issues because transnational repression, is not new to the Tibetan community. The CCP has targeted the Tibetan diaspora, using family members back inside Tibet to control and sort of undermine the legitimacy or functionality of the Tibetan overseas organisations." Commenting further on this issue, Dawa said,



"The protests that took place inside Tibet in the late 1980s and then following that, there was a huge uprising in 2008 inside Tibet and it was that particular uprising that the Chinese government viewed the Tibetans who were outside of Tibet as the insighters of the protest inside Tibet.

That's why they really think about the need to cut off any sort of communication or relationship between the Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. And then sending a spy and collecting personal information of Tibetans in the diaspora because they view it as a threat." the statement added.

While speaking to ANI, Dolma Tsering, deputy speaker of the Tibetan parliament in exile, said, "When you do lots of wrong things, you take others in the same way... They are hiding lots of things about what's happening in Tibet and in mainland China as a whole from the world. "Tibet is cut off from the rest of the world. Why? Because they have lots of things to hide... The violation of not only human rights in the name of conserving nature, but also national parks are coming up," she added

Additionally, the deputy speaker remarked, "The centuries-old nomads are relocated because they want to make Tibet into a slaughterhouse to raise consumption for the tourism that is inflowing into China so they're hiding all these things but what do we have in exile? We are as transparent as we can be. We just have the truth with us." "His Holiness has always welcomed the Chinese leadership to come and investigate what we are doing here. We are an open file to the world. Whatever we say to the world, what we do in the office, everything is transparent because we have a democracy, a rule of law and the people's will being taken into consideration, which is just the reverse in China. so there is nothing to spy on the exile government." the statment added Deputy speaker further said, "Many of the time, our computers are being hacked. Whenever we do any kind of activity, the people who are in charge of those core groups

will find all our emails were hacked but they will find nothing because whatever we say, you will find on our computers. We have nothing to hide. So I am challenging China to open the Tibet and we invite you here to investigate what we are doing here."

[Journal retracts 18 papers from China due to Tibet and other human rights concerns](#)

17 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

TibetanReview.net, Feb17'24) – A genetics journal from a leading scientific publisher in the United States has retracted 18 papers from China in what is seen as the biggest mass retraction of academic research due to concerns about human rights violations, reported theguardian.com Feb 15. It followed a lengthy investigation of allegations that DNA samples collected, including from Tibet and Xinjiang, could not have been free or fair given the circumstances in which they occurred.

The articles were published in Molecular Genetics & Genomic Medicine (MGGM), a genetics journal published by the US academic publishing company Wiley. They were retracted on Monday (Feb 12) after an agreement between the journal's editor in chief, Suzanne Hart, and the publishing company, the report said.

This followed a review process that took over two years and in which investigators found "inconsistencies" between the research and the consent documentation provided by researchers.

The papers by different scientists are all based on research that draws on DNA samples collected from populations in the greater China territory of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In several cases, the researchers used samples from populations deemed by experts and human rights campaigners to be vulnerable to exploitation and oppression in the PRC, leading to concerns that they would not be able to freely consent to such samples being taken, the report said.

Tellingly, several of the researchers were associated with public security authorities in

the PRC, a fact that “voids any notion of free informed consent,” Yves Moreau, a professor of engineering at the University of Leuven, in Belgium, who focuses on DNA analysis, has said.

It was Moreau who first raised concerns about the papers with Hart, MGGM’s editor-in-chief, in Mar 2021.

One retracted paper has studied the DNA of Tibetans in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, using blood samples collected from 120 individuals. The research article was cited as saying “all individuals provided written informed consent” and that work was approved by the Fudan University ethics committee.

However, the retraction notice published on Feb 12 has stated that an ethical review “uncovered inconsistencies between the consent documentation and the research reported; the documentation was not sufficiently detailed to resolve the concerns raised.”

Xie Jianhui, the corresponding author on the study, is from the department of forensic medicine at Fudan University in Shanghai, and has not agree with the retraction.

Several of Xie’s co-authors are stated to be affiliated with the public security authorities in the PRC, including the public security authorities in Tibet.

Tibet is considered to be one of the most closely surveilled and tightly monitored regions in the PRC. In its most recent annual report, the campaign group Human Rights Watch said that the authorities “enforce severe restrictions on freedoms of religion, expression, movement and assembly” there, the report noted.

MGGM, seen as a mid-ranking genetics publication, is considered to be a relatively easy forum for publication, which may have been a draw for Chinese researchers looking to publish in English-language journals, David Curtis, a professor of genetics at University College London, has said.

MGGM primarily publishes studies on the medical applications of genetics, such as a recent paper on genetic disorders linked to hearing loss. The sudden pivot towards

publishing forensic genetics research from China came as other forensic genetics journals started facing more scrutiny for publishing research based on DNA samples from vulnerable minorities in the PRC. Moreau has said. He argues that may have pushed more controversial research towards mid-ranking journals such as MGGM that do not specialize in forensic genetics.

The Wiley retractions was stated to have come days before a Chinese government deadline requiring universities to submit lists of all academic articles retracted in the past three years.

According to an analysis by Nature, nearly 14,000 retraction notices were published last year, of which three-quarters involved a Chinese co-author, the report said.

[Tibetans in Eastern Tibet Protest Hydropower Station and their relocation](#)

16 February 2024, [International Campaign for Tibet](#)

Hundreds of Tibetans staged protests outside the Derge (Chinese: Dege) county government’s office in the Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, on Feb. 14, 2024, calling for halt to a proposed hydropower station construction in their area, and to withdraw the order for relocation of Tibetans from the surrounding area because of this.

Videos of the Tibetans’ protest were being circulated in the social media. A large group of Tibetans are seen peacefully protesting in front of a government office building and officials (mostly in civilian clothes) can be seen stopping the crowd from moving forward. Voice of America Tibetan reported that the Derge county officials informed the protesting Tibetans that nothing could be done on this at their level.

According to a source in exile, who is from Derge, the Tibetans who were protesting were from Wentuo town (Wentuo Zhen) in Derge county who were being asked to relocate to another place near Moshoe bridge in the same county. The exact location of Moshoe bridge

could not be ascertained, but the source said some houses have already been built there to house the people.

Voice of America Tibetan service reported that the hydropower station was the Kamtok (Gangtuo) Hydropower Station. A posting about the protest on Chinese social media outlet Weibo also identified it as being Kamtok. ICT could not get independent confirmation, but this particular station is located over the Drichu River in the nearby Kamtok Township, Jomda (Jiangda) County, Chamdo (Changdu) City, TAR. Following the protest, one social media posting said the authorities have taken down the video circulating on Weibo. Radio Free Asia Tibetan reports that following the protests, Chinese authorities increased security measures and have been trying to identify protest organizers and participants, two sources inside Tibet said.

Several monasteries and dozens of villages in two townships in the county face the threat of relocation, according to Tibetan language media reports.

The International Campaign for Tibet is deeply concerned about the apparent disregard of local Tibetan's rights and the threat of relocation, connected to the construction of the hydropower station. ICT is calling on the Chinese authorities to respect the rights of peaceful protesters and to refrain from using violence or resort to arbitrary detention of those involved. Moreover, ICT is urging the international community to press on the Chinese government to respect international human rights standards.

The Chinese government continues to pursue blind and commercial infrastructure projects in Tibet that are designed and implemented without regard for environmental impacts or local community concerns. These projects, which include rail roads, highways, and power grids, combined with resource extraction projects such as hydropower dams and mining create economic and environmental costs that disproportionately impact Tibetans, ICT said.

### **Tibetan water security**

Tibet is home to one-fifth of the world's freshwater supply. Glacial runoff from it forms rivers in almost every country across South and Southeast Asia, with an estimated 1.8 billion people dependent on this water's healthy, unimpeded flow.

The integrity of Tibet's ecology is critical to the Tibetan' people's way of life and directly contributes to the stability and economic wellbeing of downstream countries in South and Southeast Asia.

However, large-scale water diversion projects and hydropower development are having dramatic downstream consequences, including lack of access to freshwater, economic disruption, and negative impacts on downstream ecosystems.

China arrests Tibetan monk for possession of Dalai Lama photo

15 February 2024, [RFA](#)



*An unidentified monk holds a picture of the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, in his room in Labrang Monastery in Xiahe county, western China's Gansu province, in 2012.*

A Buddhist monk in a Tibetan-populated area of Sichuan province was arrested last July for possessing a photo of the Dalai Lama and since then his whereabouts have remained unknown, two sources from inside Tibet told Radio Free Asia.

Chinese authorities arrested Tenzin Khenrap, 29, in July 2023 on a charge of having a portrait of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader on his

mobile phone, along with other books and documents published outside Tibet.

Khenrap, whose pen name is Dhong Rangchak, is from Nyagchu county in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

China regards the Dalai Lama and Tibetans who live in exile abroad as separatists, and being caught with a picture of the spiritual leader or having contact with Tibetans abroad is considered an act of separatism and a punishable offense.

Authorities in China maintain a tight lockdown on the flow of information in and out of the country's Tibetan regions, and it can often take weeks or months to learn of arrests and other incidents inside Tibet.

After his arrest, authorities detained Khenrap in Sichuan province, known as Kham in Tibetan, but his current location and circumstances are unknown, said the sources who requested anonymity, citing safety reasons.

Authorities also revoked access to his social media accounts, they added.

Chinese authorities have not allowed Khenrap's immediate family members to meet with him since his arrest or provided information on where he is being detained, one of the sources said.

"Khenrap's mother remains very worried about her son, and her health has deteriorated since his arrest last year," said the source.

The monk, who speaks fluent Tibetan and Mandarin, is known for intensely following developments about Tibetans' struggle against Chinese-government repression and for writing articles online, the same source said.

Khenrap was a student at several monasteries in Sichuan province, including Lithang Gonchen, Sershul, and Nalendra, which was the single largest monastery founded by popular Tibetan religious teacher and activist Tulku Tenzin Delek and which served as the primary institution for his increasing network of branch monasteries, monks and activists, the two sources said.

Tulku Tenzin Delek was 65 when he died under mysterious circumstances on July 12, 2015, while serving a life sentence following what

rights groups and supporters called a wrongful conviction on a charge of bombing a public square in Sichuan's provincial capital of Chengdu in April 2002.

Widely respected among Tibetans for his efforts to protect Tibetan culture and the environment, he was initially sentenced to death, but his term was later commuted to life imprisonment.

Chinese authorities maintain a tight grip on Tibet, restricting Tibetans' political activities and peaceful expression of cultural and religious identity. Tibetans frequently complain of discrimination and human rights abuses by authorities and policies they say are aimed at eradicating their national and cultural identity. In Feb. 2023, Chinese authorities arrested Tsultrim, a Tibetan from Tsaruma township in Ngaba's Kyungchu county, after they discovered pictures of the Dalai Lama on his mobile phone.

He was detained until April, after which he was sentenced to two years in prison by the People's Court of Ngaba, a Tibetan region in southwestern China's Sichuan province, also known as Aba in Chinese.

Chinese nationals moving into hitherto vacant 'border defence village' buildings in occupied Tibet  
15 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

(TibetanReview.net, Feb15'24) –Chinese nationals have started occupying the double-storeyed spacious buildings in some of the model "Xiaokang" border defence villages that had come up in occupied Tibet across India's north-eastern borders along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) since 2019, reported the *indianexpress.com* Feb 15. While the existence of such new villages so-close to the border is itself a matter of concern to India, it is unclear whether the new residents are civilian or military, the report said.

The report cited senior Indian officials familiar with the matter as saying the Chinese had started occupying a couple of these village buildings in the new villages on the Tibetan side of the LAC across from Lohit Valley and the

Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh over the last few months.

The report noted that China has been constructing 628 such “well-off villages” along India’s borders with occupied Tibet, which China now calls “Xizang” to make clear the once independent Tibet no longer exists, including along Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh for over five years now.

While the exact nature of these villages is unclear, the dwellings are understood to be “dual-use infrastructure” — for both civil and military purposes — and seen as a Chinese assertion of its territorial claims along the LAC. They have thus remained a concern for the Indian military, the report said.

It said that in the last few months, the hitherto unoccupied double-storeyed, large and spacious buildings constructed as part of these villages, had begun to be occupied by Chinese nationals over the last few months, and it was not clear whether these were civilian or military personnel.

The report cited sources as also saying the Chinese were building infrastructure all along the LAC bordering the northeast, even as the LAC remained far off from most inhabited areas or areas of importance except for Tawang and the Siliguri Corridor.

“They (the Chinese) have built sufficient infrastructure along the LAC at Tawang, but they are not stopping at that. Even in other areas such as Siang valley of Arunachal Pradesh, we have been seeing rapid development of Chinese infrastructure,” one official has said.

The official has added that the Chinese have consistently improved their existing infrastructure including improving their connectivity through passes, constructing roads and bridges and their model villages. China has also been seen constructing infrastructure, including border villages, in Bhutanese territory.

India has decided to respond to these developments, including with Vibrant Villages programmes under which it plans to develop 663 border villages into modern villages with

all amenities in the first phase. Of them, at least 17 such villages along the borders with occupied Tibet in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, have been selected for development as a pilot project under the programme, the report noted.

In Arunachal Pradesh, villages in the eastern part of the state and in the Tawang region have been identified such as Zemithang, Taksing, Chayang Tajo, Tuting and Kibithu. Besides, three major highways are at different stages of construction: the Trans-Arunachal Highway; the Frontier Highway; and the East-West Industrial Corridor Highway. Besides, there are plans to improve connectivity to Tawang with the construction of at least two alternate axes — in addition to the existing one connecting Guwahati and Tawang.

Roads are being built on all sides of the state’s Dibang valley, which previously had roads just till a little ahead of Anini, the report noted.

“Work is underway to improve connectivity to the passes, establish laterals for inter-valley connectivity and on construction of helipads and advanced landing grounds at various locations in the state,” another official has said.

[China Increasing Digital Surveillance of Tibetans](#)  
10 February 2024, [RTV](#)

A new report by Tibetan activist groups and experts shows new evidence that the Chinese government is increasing digital surveillance of Tibetans through practices such as the mandatory installation of apps at police checkpoints or utilizing big data policing platforms supported by technologies from American tech firms.

Some analysts say these new findings provide a glimpse into Beijing’s security apparatus in Tibet. “The Chinese government’s apparatus in Tibet remains a black box in nature, but this report provides [the outside world] with a glimpse into how these systems work,” Greg Walton, senior investigator at U.K.-based security consulting firm Secdev Group and one of the report’s authors, told VOA by phone.



The report from Tibet Watch and a Tibet-focused research network called Turquoise Roof found that authorities have been asking residents in Tibet to install an app called “National Anti-Fraud Center” on their smartphones since 2021.

According to some testimonies from Tibetans, police would routinely ask residents to install the security application on their smartphones at checkpoints while local authorities have been teaching the public how to download and use the app. Some Tibetans have expressed concern that the app may be used to track their movements and potentially access data on their phones.

“It looks like a surveillance app that tracks not only our movement but also has built-in automatic voice recording and photo-sharing functionalities,” an unnamed Tibetan man told Tibet Watch in 2023, according to the report.

Based on their analysis of the app, the report found that permissions that the app asked for from smartphone users could allow app operators to access sensitive user data or have control over certain device functionalities.

The report said the broad scope of permissions could let authorities conduct highly invasive surveillance, which is in line with measures that Chinese authorities typically use in regions like Tibet and Xinjiang to maintain public order. “Our analysis suggests that data controlled by the Anti-Fraud app could connect into wider systems operated by the Criminal Investigation Bureau [and] the mandatory installation of the app at police checkpoints could serve as a platform for harvesting a dataset used for monitoring and controlling the population, particularly in suppressing dissent and cultural expression,” the report wrote.

In addition to the forced installation of the anti-fraud app, the report also investigated a big data policing platform used by Tibetan authorities called “Tibet Underworld Criminal Integrated Intelligence Application Platform.”

Their analysis of government procurement notices suggests the platform, which is developed on top of technology originating

from American tech company Oracle, combines data from several Public Security Bureau systems in Tibet and is an instrumental part of Chinese authorities’ campaign to criminalize moderate cultural and religious expressions or language rights advocacy.

“The platform is presented as being designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement in Tibet,” the report wrote, adding that the platform can only be accessed through the Public Security Bureau’s internal network and authorities urge contractors to “replace the Oracle database” with a Chinese equivalent.

Walton from Secdev Group told VOA that the evidence suggests Chinese authorities’ law enforcement measures in Tibet are “more invasive” than the measures used in other parts of China. “The big data systems use machine learning to track Tibetans’ kinship networks or analyze their social networks to surface what the Chinese party-state defines as organized crimes,” he said.

Since the big data policing platform is built on top of technologies from Oracle, Walton thinks foreign companies have clear responsibilities to ensure their products are not used to assist the Chinese government’s effort to crack down on civilians or ethnic minorities.

“Human rights organizations have made clear the negative impacts that [big data policing system] driven by software sold by Oracle, [so] I think these companies should do human rights impact assessments to see what impact their software will have [when it’s used for policing purposes in China,]” he said.

Oracle did not respond to VOA’s requests for comment.

The report says that the Chinese authorities’ aim of using big data policing platforms in both Tibet and Xinjiang is to achieve “control and suppression through intelligence-led policing. Some researchers say the Chinese government’s crackdown on ethnic minorities is part of its overall effort to build up a “totalitarian social control state.”

“The Chinese government is developing these more modern social control mechanisms that



are supposed to make all aspects of society controllable,” Maya Wang, Interim China Director at Human Rights Watch, told VOA by phone.

“Since the ethnic groups are at the short end of the Chinese state repression and social control when the surveillance systems are running in the background in Tibet or Xinjiang, they are also vetting people, and those who are considered politically unreliable are held in re-education camps or prisons,” she added.

In response to the report’s claim that Beijing is increasing digital surveillance on Tibetans, the Chinese embassy in the U.S. described the finding as “groundless accusations.”

“China is a country under the rule of law, and the privacy of Chinese citizens is fully protected by law, regardless of their ethnicity,” Liu Peng-yu, the spokesperson of the Chinese embassy in the United States, told VOA in a written response.

As Beijing increases its control over Tibet through digital surveillance, the report said these efforts are changing the way that Tibetans communicate and are creating a society-wide chilling effect across the region. “In many cases, this trend leads to a complete breakdown of contact,” the report said.

Some Tibetan activists say the digital surveillance architecture that the Chinese government is trying to “perfect” in the region will create a deep psychological impact on local residents, forcing them to practice self-censorship.

“Tibetans will be even more careful with what they say or what they write on their phones,” Tenzin Choekyi, a senior researcher at Tibet Watch, told VOA by phone, adding that communication between Tibetans in China and the diaspora community will likely become more difficult to maintain.

China could use anti-fraud app to monitor Tibetans – report

07 February 2024, [BBC](#)

### **A Chinese app aimed at preventing fraud could be used to monitor Tibetans, according to a new report.**

The investigation by Tibet research groups found the app could monitor users' texts, internet browser histories and access personal data.

They also alleged some Tibetans were being forced to download the app.

Restrictions in Tibet have increased in recent years, say rights groups, tightening the screws on an already heavily controlled part of China. Authorities have ramped up state surveillance and censorship in recent years, particularly during the pandemic.

Politically sensitive regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang have especially come under scrutiny. Beijing has long been wary of "secessionism" in these areas, but has stepped up crackdowns under leader Xi Jinping's rule which has emphasised nationalist unity.

The new report, by research network Turquoise Roof and rights group Tibet Watch, centres on the controversial National Anti-Fraud Centre app which was rolled out in 2021. While the report did not present any evidence that the app was actively targeting Tibetans, it said the app "aligns with extensive surveillance practices" and could aid the Chinese government's efforts in controlling them.

The National Anti-Fraud Centre has been promoted as a scam prevention app which can detect potential fraudulent texts and calls, while allowing users to report scams and receive help quickly from authorities. China has been battling a wave of internet and phone scams in recent years.

Turquoise Roof conducted a forensic analysis of the app and says it found that some of its functions could be exploited for surveillance purposes.

The app can monitor incoming text messages, and access call logs and internet browser histories. It can also capture users' inputs such

as passwords, and take photos which would allow it to gather visual data on users and surroundings.

Its face recognition verification feature could also be used for large-scale harvesting of data to enhance tracking and monitoring of Tibetans, the report added.

One way is by forcing Tibetans to download the app. One refugee told Tibet Watch last year he was stopped at a police checkpoint while on his way home from school, and told to install the app on his phone.

Complaints about mandatory downloads of the app arose soon after its launch, when it was installed on an estimated 200 million phones.

Some local government agencies made it compulsory for employees, while others had to download the app in order to enrol their children into schools or apply for identification cards, reported the Financial Times.

The newspaper also spoke to users who said they were contacted by the police after the app detected they had visited foreign financial news websites, including Bloomberg.

Separately, Turquoise Roof uncovered from government procurement notices that Chinese authorities were maintaining a large database of Tibetan individuals deemed as a threat to stability. The database used software from US company Oracle.

They said it was "reasonable to hypothesise" that any data collected by the anti-fraud app could be used in this database.

The report called for the Chinese government to put in place greater privacy protections and to investigate claims of coercion to download the app.

It also called for international companies and governments to ensure they do not provide resources for China's mass surveillance programmes.

Beijing has wielded a tight grip on Tibet since it sent in troops in 1950 to enforce its claims of sovereignty over the region.

Activists say China limits Tibetans' freedom of travel by controlling their passports, and also heavily monitors their communications with the outside world.

Tibet Watch has documented several cases of Tibetans detained for their messages on popular messaging platform WeChat, and instances where accounts and keywords deemed too politically sensitive were suspended or scrubbed.

Besides Tibet, China has famously employed mass surveillance techniques in Xinjiang to control the Uyghurs.

In 2019 Human Rights Watch found that authorities were using a surveillance platform and app to monitor the movements and data of people in Xinjiang.

That same year, an investigation by several Western newspapers found that border police were installing surveillance apps on the phones of visitors to the region.

[Tibetan monk who criticized China's policies released from prison](#)

07 February 2024, [RFA](#)

A Tibetan monk who criticized China's restrictive policies in Tibet and was convicted of "inciting separatism" has been released after four and half years in prison.

Rinchen Tsultrim was released from Mianyang prison in Sichuan province on Feb. 1 after completing his prison term, two sources told Radio Free Asia.

Tsultrim was a monk at the Nangzhig Monastery in Sichuan's Ngaba county when he was taken into custody in 2019. He was secretly detained for more than a year and sentenced in a closed trial in 2021.

Before his arrest, he had written favorably on the language rights of Tibetans and had praised the previous incarnation of the Panchen Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's second-most important spiritual leader behind the Dalai Lama.

He posted the writings on his website and had received at least three warnings from Chinese authorities before he was detained.

Separatism, or "working to split the country," is an accusation often leveled by Chinese authorities against Tibetans opposing the assimilation of Tibet's distinctive national and

cultural identity into China's dominant Han culture.

Scores of monks, writers, educators, and musical performers have been arrested under the charge in recent years.

Particular targets of censors and police are images of the Dalai Lama shared on mobile phones and calls for the preservation of the Tibetan language, now under threat from government orders to establish Chinese as the main language of instruction in Tibetan schools.

While in prison, Tsultrim was refused permission to meet with his family, and contact was restricted to brief phone calls once a month, sources told RFA at the time.

There were also reports that Tsultrim was subjected to torture, forced labor and political indoctrination while in prison.

The two sources, who requested anonymity for safety reasons, refused to discuss the current condition of Tsultrim's health, citing fear of repercussions. They said that he remains under "constant surveillance."

China 'pressuring' eminent monks and admn in Tibet to denounce Dalai Lama

07 February 2024, [The Tribune](#)

With Losar (Tibetan new year) approaching, China is allegedly pressuring eminent monks and monastic administrators in the Tibetan Autonomous Region to denounce the Dalai Lama.

Tibetan government-in-exile sources said that the Chinese authorities in Tibetan-populated areas of Tibet visited at least 35 Buddhist monasteries and urged eminent monks to "deeply expose and denounce" the Dalai Lama and safeguard the "unity of the motherland". They visited the monasteries in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture from January 11 to 17, according to a statement issued by the United Front Work Department, which oversees the Chinese Government's domestic and external influence operations.

Tibetan New Year, known as Losar, falls on February 10, the same day as China's Lunar

New Year, the biggest holiday of the year. A report of the Tibetan government-in-exile says that the Chinese authorities accuse the Tibetan spiritual leader, who lives in exile in Dharamsala, of trying to split the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan-populated areas in China's Sichuan and Qinghai provinces from the rest of the country.

However, the Dalai Lama does not advocate for independence but rather a "middle way" that accepts Tibet's status as part of China. He urges greater cultural and religious freedom, including strengthening language rights that are guaranteed for ethnic minorities under China's constitution.

The Tibetan government-in-exile says that Chinese officials visited well-known monasteries in the area, including Palyul, Yarchen Gar and Katog, which are associated with the Nyingma School of Vajrayana Buddhism. The Chinese officials urged Tibetan monks to promote the "five identifications" that President Xi Jinping had repeatedly said was required of all Chinese citizens and minority groups. These are identifying with the motherland, Chinese nation, Chinese culture, Chinese Communist Party and socialism with Chinese characteristics.

The Tibetan government-in-exile said that Tibet watchers criticised the move as disingenuous and an effort to put pressure on the Tibetan monastic community to toe the Chinese Communist Party's line.

"The Chinese Government's practice of extending greetings and monetary gifts to Tibetan monks and nuns on important occasions and holidays are actually tools of deception," said Dawa Tsering, director of the Tibet Policy Institute, official think tank of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala. The Tibetan government-in-exile alleged that in their New Year message to Tibetan Buddhist leaders in Palyul county, the Chinese authorities also ordered head monks to carry out an "in-depth, systematic study and political education" of the "party's religious work theories and principles and policies".

China claims 'no idea' on monk it arrested for republishing books from exile Tibetan community

06 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

(TibetanReview.net, Feb06'24) – Chinese authorities in the historically Tibetan region of Sichuan Province had arrested a Buddhist monk in Jun 2023 for having republished books from the exile Tibetan community and also for having contact with people outside the country, reported the Tibetan service of rfa.org Feb 5, citing belated information from two unnamed local Tibetan sources.

It was not clear what books were republished and what the nature of the contacts were.

The report said the whereabouts of the monk, named as Lobsang Thabkhey, 54, remained unknown. He was reported to have served as the librarian of Kirti Monastery in the province's Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) county when he republished and disseminated the books in question. The witnesses have spoken on condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

The Ngaba police station, on being contacted by Radio Free Asia, has claimed ignorance about the monk. This was despite the fact that he was stated to have been summoned several times by Chinese police before his eventual arrest.

China maintains especially tight control on information and channels of communication in the Tibetan areas in the name of fighting separatism, making it all the more difficult even to people within the country to get timely and proper information on developing situation.

Thabkhey is said to originally belong to the county's Meruma township.

## China Politics, Protests, Detentions and other news from the PRC

China's embattled former foreign minister steps down as a lawmaker

27 February 2024, [NBC News](#)

Qin Gang was dismissed in July in one of China's biggest political surprises in years. He has yet to reappear publicly.

China's former foreign minister, Qin Gang, who has been missing from public view since June, has resigned from the national legislature, state media reported Tuesday. Qin was dismissed as foreign minister in July, in one of China's biggest political surprises in years.

The 57-year-old served for only seven months before he disappeared from public view last June. The government announced a month later that he had been dismissed from his post. He has yet to reappear publicly.

Qin was replaced as foreign minister by his predecessor, Wang Yi.

According to a notice by the National People's Congress Standing Committee, the Tianjin Municipal People's Congress accepted Qin's resignation as a delegate to the upcoming annual parliamentary session.

Official websites no longer list Qin as a member of the State Council, China's Cabinet, but there has been no mention of whether he has been excluded from China's ruling Communist Party.

His disappearance came during a series of dismissals at the top echelons of the party that included former Defense Minister Li Shangfu and other top military officials.

Signs of overt political friction are extremely rare in China, especially since President Xi Jinping tightened his control over the country's politics, partly through an anti-

corruption drive that purged scores of his presumed rivals.

Qin's and Li's ousters are believed to be part of a broader effort to reduce security vulnerabilities amid China's increasing competition with the United States and its allies.

The National People's Congress, China's rubber-stamp parliament, is to convene its annual session in early March and is expected to focus on the country's ailing economy. China's economy expanded by 5.2% last year but is forecast to slow sharply this year, bogged down by a property crisis, high youth unemployment and massive local government debt.

The Wall Street Journal reported in September, citing people familiar with a briefing, that Qin was ousted over an extramarital affair he had during a previous posting as ambassador to the U.S. An investigation was focused on whether his conduct had compromised China's national security, according to the Journal.

[Leaked document trove shows a Chinese hacking scheme focused on harassing dissidents](#)

22 February 2024, [Wisconsin Public Radio](#)

A large trove of more than 500 sensitive technical documents posted online anonymously last week details one Chinese technology company's hacking operations, target lists and marketing materials for the Chinese government.

The majority of the operations appear to be focused on surveilling and harassing dissidents who publicly criticize the Chinese government, including on global social media platforms like X, formerly known as Twitter.

Target lists reveal victims from at least 14 governments from Pakistan to Australia, as well as academic institutions, pro-democracy organizations in places like Hong Kong, as well as the military alliance NATO. The company was also bidding for work to surveil the minority Uyghur population in Xinjiang, a broader Chinese government program that major

global human rights' organizations around the world have heavily criticized. There are even pictures of custom devices used for spying, such as a recording device disguised as a power bank.

Cybersecurity researchers are still investigating different components of the leak, which was shared to the open source development website popular with programmers, called GitHub. However, experts from top U.S. cybersecurity companies including Google's Mandiant and Sentinel Labs have shared preliminary analysis of the contents of the leak, believing the documents to be authentic.

"We have every reason to believe this is the authentic data of a contractor supporting global and domestic cyber espionage operations out of China," said John Hultquist, the chief analyst for Mandiant Intelligence, a part of Google Cloud. "This leak is narrow, but it is deep. We rarely get such unfettered access to the inner workings of any intelligence operation. We are working hard to learn as much as we can and put it to good use."

The state-affiliated company, called i-Soon, is known to be one of many contractors and subcontractors who compete for opportunities to perform hacking and surveillance operations for different Chinese government agencies. The company is currently facing litigation from another Chinese contractor called Chengdu 404, a company that the U.S. government has publicly linked in court documents to hacking operations for the state. It appears i-Soon may have done subcontracting work with Chengdu 404.

In previous public materials, i-Soon has noted relationships with China's Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of State Security, and People's Liberation Army, among others. The company is publicly known for providing cybersecurity trainings around the country from its base in Shanghai.

But beyond what's publicly known, the details in the leak give internal insights into how an increasingly competitive marketplace for hacking operations within China functions. It's unclear if all the claims made in marketing



materials included in the leak are true, such as the ability to break into devices manufactured by top U.S. companies like Apple and Microsoft. However, it's clear that the company is heavily invested in automating the ability to constantly monitor platforms like X and Facebook. Those platforms, unlike the popular WeChat, are not controlled by the Chinese government, making them popular with dissidents.

There are also details in the leak concerning internal pay scales and other bureaucratic details of contracts with the Chinese government. There is a note, or "ReadMe" document, included on the GitHub page where the leak is hosted, where the purported source of the leak claims to be dissatisfied with the company's policies. That could indicate the source being a disgruntled employee, though it's also possible the leak is the result of an intelligence operation or the work of a competitor.

While the contents of the leak are not entirely surprising, they're especially helpful to specialists and researchers, who continue to review the contents. In particular, individual documents can help researchers fact-check their assumptions about who was responsible for previously discovered breaches.

China revamps discipline inspection rules to ensure Xi Jinping's instructions are carried out

22 February 2024, [South China Morning Post](#)

China's ruling Communist Party has revamped a set of rules to bolster its discipline inspections, making it a top priority to check whether cadres have fully implemented instructions from President Xi Jinping.

The party's Central Committee has released revised regulations on inspection work and issued a directive asking all regions and government agencies to strictly comply, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Wednesday.

According to Xinhua, the revisions were approved at a January 31 meeting of the

party's 24-member Politburo and circulated within the party on February 8.

The revised regulations include a new clause that defines inspection work as the "political supervision" of party organs from the top down, according to the full text released by Xinhua.

A newly added paragraph at the beginning of the document states that the inspection work's "fundamental task is to resolutely safeguard the core status" of Xi, as well as his authority and leadership.

Another new section explains that the party's inspection team shall, as its top priority, check on the implementation of "major decisions and arrangements of the party's Central Committee, especially the implementation of General Secretary Xi Jinping's important speeches and important instructions".

The revisions also removed three articles detailing specific corruption and disciplinary issues to watch for, which had been a top priority in the previous version, and summarised them in a single paragraph that appears after the section about implementing Xi's instructions.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University in Beijing, said the revisions made it clear that inspection work was now largely focused on how closely China's different regions and government departments were following and executing Xi's grand plan.

"Beijing has learned a lot in the inspection work of the past decade and clearly wants to make sure previous cases in which the local government ignored Xi's repeated instructions do not happen again," said Xie, who is also a senior fellow at the Taihe Institute, a Beijing think tank.

Discipline inspection, which involves sending teams of senior inspectors to screen local disciplinary problems, has been a powerful tool for the party under Xi's leadership since 2012.

The practice gives corruption busters access to various state and party organs and state-owned enterprises so they can proactively search for leads on corruption. It has been



credited by Beijing for uncovering many high-profile corruption cases.

The rules on discipline inspection were last revised in 2017.

“The focus has clearly been changed to checking on the political and work alignment of regions and government departments,” Xie said, noting that the revisions added that a key principle of inspection work was to “focus on the party’s central task and serve the big plan”. He said that meant that when Beijing issues new directions, its inspectors will make sure party and state organs recalibrate their work, leading them in the right direction.

The new code casts the inspection net wider. Under the revised rules, key state-owned enterprises, especially financial institutions, and state-run tertiary institutions will be targets for inspection, along with party committees in government agencies.

It also gives the inspectors much wider access to local government departments – including those for propaganda, security, auditing, finance, statistics and petitions – to support inspection work when necessary.

Tsinghua’s Xie said this showed Beijing was determined to get accurate information and curb inflated official statistics.

“That is why the new code asked the inspectors to go directly to the ground for information, so they can spot misleading numbers from local governments and rectify them accordingly,” he said.

The party made falsification of data a disciplinary violation in December, and last month Beijing sent stern warnings calling the practice “the biggest corruption in the statistical sphere”.

China’s would-be powerhouse Hunan wants officials to ‘emancipate their minds’

19 February 2024, [South China Morning Post](#)

Communist Party officials in Hunan province in central China have kicked off a campaign which recalls Beijing’s reversal of the Maoist political and economic doctrines of the last century, in

a move that analysts say will have limited political implications.

According to a notice made public on Sunday, provincial cadres at all levels are taking part in the campaign, which started in early February and will continue until the end of March.

The campaign’s name – “large-scale discussions on emancipating the mind” – was a clear reference to the party’s efforts to kick off much-needed market reforms after the death of leader Mao Zedong in 1976.

President Xi Jinping, who came to power in 2013, revived the slogan to call for effective local governance and it was also in evidence on Sunday in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, where top cadres used it in a pledge to drive growth.

Deng Xiaoping, who took over as leader in December 1978, made “emancipate the mind” his signature slogan as he paved the way for more than 40 years of reform and opening up. Later Chinese leaders also used the slogan to urge the country to reflect on the lessons of Mao’s governance, especially during the Cultural Revolution – a decade of political and social upheaval that almost paralysed the national economy, and only ended after his death.

The latest “emancipating the mind” campaign is fundamentally different from the 1970s and 1980s, according to Chen Daoyin, a political commentator and former professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law.

“The biggest difference is their political orientations: the emancipation of the mind movement by Deng Xiaoping was to break the 10-year ideological imprisonment of the Cultural Revolution,” Chen said.

“Now in Hunan, it basically aims to strengthen Xi’s Thought and better serve Xi’s goals.”

Chen noted that the Hunan campaign adopted only the first part of Deng’s three-part proposition – “emancipate the mind, seek truth from facts, unite and look forward”.

As such, the campaign would not make a major difference because all discussions were confined within existing policy priorities,

without seeking more fundamental breakthroughs, he said.

The Hunan notice placed strong emphasis on effectively reviving the economy, as well as paying homage to Xi's teachings.

The discussions, taking place throughout the province, address problems with local cadres, including "lack of confidence in development" and "insufficient spirit of responsibility".

At the same time, the campaign aimed to fundamentally reverse the "addiction" that leads to many officials simply relying on GDP growth for evaluations, the notice said.

Through the discussions, problems such as raising loans regardless of risks, investing blindly on projects, cheating on data, and "lying flat" to evade making mistakes should be resolved, it said.

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, said Hunan's campaign was "a tactical attempt" to re-energise China's massive bureaucracy.

Many officials have been accused of "lying flat" – the phenomenon commonly known in the West as "goblin mode", which describes workers who put in just enough effort to keep their jobs and no more.

"After a decade of anti-corruption and disciplinary campaigns, many officials are in risk-aversion mode," Xie said.

They were unwilling to take responsibility, push development initiatives or incentivise private sector growth "as they are afraid of making mistakes or facing supervision checks".

"It seems that Hunan is trying to trailblaze a way to give its officials more freedom to act and more tolerance of their probable mistakes," he said.

China's economy is facing multiple challenges, including a prolonged property market downturn, a local government debt crisis, and weak demand, as well as heightened geopolitical tensions.

The International Monetary Fund expects the Chinese economy to grow by 4.6 per cent this year, before slowing to 4 per cent in 2025,

despite last year's higher than expected growth of 5.2 per cent.

Hunan – which has ambitions to become the most "important advanced manufacturing highlands of the country" – achieved 5 trillion yuan (US\$702 billion) in economic volume last year at a GDP growth rate of 4.6 per cent.

The province – which has set a growth target of around 6 per cent for this year – is at a "critical stage of comprehensively deepening reform and opening up and promoting high-quality development", according to the notice.

"More than at any time in history, Hunan needs to break the ice with ideas to lead reform breakthroughs."

According to the notice, discussions should abide by the guidance of the party's Central Committee and Xi, as general secretary, and focus on removing obstacles that hinder development, as well as other issues to "prevent and resolve various major risks".

The notice also called on the province's cadres to create a better business environment for private enterprises, and to help them solve funding and payment delays, as well as other difficulties.

The notice said the campaign was taking in all levels of the party, starting with the grass-roots members and spreading to county, city and provincial levels of the party's organs, as well as companies and schools.

At the upper echelons, Hunan's senior provincial officials would hold discussion panels and make inspection tours, it said.

Alfred Wu, an associate professor with the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said that under Deng the slogan "emancipate the mind" was about relaxing socialist thought and adopting international norms.

But now, he said, it meant that officials would try every possible avenue to deliver the high-quality growth Xi wanted.

According to Wu, the specific mention of inflated growth numbers and a "lying flat" attitude among officials in the announcement could be a signal from Hunan party boss Shen Xiaoming.

Wu said Shen could be signalling that he had the political will to address these stumbling blocks, but also that he wanted the province's officials to come up with workable ideas.

Chinese firm behind local 'news' websites spreading Beijing propaganda in 30 countries  
18 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

(TibetanReview.net, Feb18'24) – China appears to have co-opted, through the agency of a Beijing public relations firm, more than 100 websites in 30 countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America to push its propaganda information at local levels. The outlets are seen to be disguised as local news outlets, but push unmitigated Chinese Party-state propaganda, suggests Reuters Feb 8, citing Toronto-based digital watchdog Citizen Lab Feb 7.

The propaganda material is interspersed with news aggregated from local news outlets and Chinese state media, the watchdog's research report was stated to show.

"While the campaign's websites enjoyed negligible exposure to date, there is a heightened risk of inadvertent amplification by the local media and target audiences, as a result of the quick multiplication of these websites and their adaptiveness to local languages and content," researcher Alberto Fittarelli has said in the report.

The sites' contents were stated to sway between conspiracy theories, often about the United States or its allies – such as a piece blaming American scientists for "leaking" Covid-19 – to articles attacking Beijing's critics. Citizen Lab has said the campaign began in mid-2020 and traced the network to public relations firm Shenzhen Haimaiyunxiang Media Co., Ltd., also known as Haimai.

One of the websites in the campaign was stated to be Roma Journal, "which looks every bit like a local Italian news outlet: headlines discuss the Italian prime minister's political prospects, a hot air balloon festival in a northern province and a book launch.

"But a 'press releases' button at a corner of its homepage leads to a range of Chinese state

media articles on topics such as China's contribution to the global economic recovery and its push towards technological innovation." What is more, much of the content on the sites Citizen Lab found was seen to be sourced from a press releases service called Times Newswire, which analysts at cybersecurity firm Mandiant last year found to be at the centre of a separate Chinese influence operation that targeted US audiences.

The report cited experts tracking such operations as saying while online influence campaigns are increasingly common as powerful people and governments around the world seek to manipulate public opinion, China remains one of the biggest sources of such drives alongside Russia and Iran.

Notably, Chinese influence operations have increased and expanded well beyond Asia, social media giant Meta said in a report in Nov 2023, calling it "the most notable change in the threat landscape" since 2020.

The report said Citizen Lab dug deeper into the network it found after a series of such websites popped up in South Korea and Italy.

It said that South Korea's National Cyber Security Center (NCSC) – part of the country's national intelligence agency – exposed 18 of the sites in a report in Nov 2023, also linking the operation to Haimai.

State education leaders urged to investigate whether CCP is infiltrating K-12 schools  
10 February 2024, [ABC News](#)

WASHINGTON (CITC) — A parents' rights group is pressing more than 30 state education leaders to investigate whether the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is attempting to infiltrate their schools.

The letter penned Thursday by Parents Defending Education (PDE) targets 34 state superintendents. Each of the 34 states were found to have school district contracts linked to the CCP, according to PDE.

The letter follows a recent House hearing on the CCP's "cyber threat" to national security, during which Rep. Raja Krishnamoorthi, D-Ill.,

said "CCP hackers" were able to access an electric grid in Texas to install malware. PDE is now warning officials that the "infiltration of American infrastructure and institutions" extends to public education.

***That should frighten people," Alex Nester, an investigative fellow for PDE, told Crisis in the Classroom (CITC).***

PDE determined that 143 U.S. schools have "fostered relationships" with the CCP and affiliated entities. Most notably, Thomas Jefferson High School in Virginia was discovered to have received more than \$1 million from such entities after agreeing to help a Beijing high school adopt its premier STEM research.

"They took that back to China and opened a string of schools that are called the Thomas Schools that are based off our model," Nester told CITC. "It's like they don't even need to steal our IP anymore, they don't even need to do this under the table, we're freely handing an adversarial foreign nation the blueprints."

Thomas Jefferson was later instructed by Virginia's education department to sever all ties with CCP-connected donors.

Nester says PDE is now choosing to alert state officials because most tend to assume national security is the responsibility of the federal government.

***And it certainly is, but there are definitely steps that local leaders, including state superintendents, can take," she told CITC. "Do an investigation, look through emails, look at your servers, do checks for malware, for viruses, anything that could have been embedded from an adversarial foreign nation."***

In its letter, PDE notes that the CCP's interest in American education is "not for the benefit of the American children," but "part of the communist regime's long-term strategy to soften American and global sentiments toward its own political goals."

**BASF to speed up exit from Xinjiang ventures after Uyghur abuse reports**

10 February 2024, [Hong Kong Free Press](#)

German chemicals giant BASF said Friday it would accelerate its exit from two joint ventures in China's Xinjiang region after allegations that its local partner violated the rights of the Uyghur minority.

Staff from Markor, with which BASF was working in the region, were alleged to have been involved in rights abuses of the members of the mostly Muslim group, broadcaster ZDF and news outlet Der Spiegel reported last week.

BASF had already announced at the end of last year plans to exit the joint ventures, which manufacture the chemical butanediol, due to commercial and environmental concerns.

But it said in a statement that it would speed up its exit following recent reports that "contain serious allegations that indicate activities inconsistent with BASF's values".

"BASF will accelerate the ongoing process to divest its shares in the two joint ventures in Korla" a town in the northwestern region, it said.

BASF said it had no indication that employees of the joint ventures were involved in rights violations, only staff of its local partner.

According to last week's reports, Markor staff had taken part in visits to homes of Uyghur families in order to spy on them.

Reports about the visits were sent to Chinese authorities in 2018 and 2019, which led to the incarceration of many Uyghurs, they said.

BASF said that the situation in Xinjiang had always been part of its assessment when looking at the joint ventures, but that regular audits had not found any evidence of human rights violations.

Rights groups have long accused Beijing of a widespread crackdown on minorities in Xinjiang, including forced labour and detention camps.

Beijing denies allegations of abuse and insists its actions in Xinjiang have helped to combat extremism and enhance development.

BASF has been ramping up its presence in China in recent years, and is building a 10-

billion-euro (\$10.8-billion) chemical complex in the southern province of Guangdong.

It has fiercely defended its investments there, with chief executive Martin Brudermueller in 2022 warning against “China-bashing” over Germany’s business ties to the world’s number two economy.

Xinjiang is home to numerous factories that supply multinational companies, including big-name Western brands.

Another German company, Volkswagen, faced accusations of using forced labour at its factory in Xinjiang. But the automaker said in December that an audit it had commissioned found no evidence.

#### China's Political Power List Hints at Fate of Disappeared Official

09 February 2024, [NewsWeek](#)

China's former Defense Minister Wei Fenghe was absent from a prominent list of retired Chinese political figures, fueling speculation about his fate.

Wei was missing from an official list of prominent retired officials published by the Chinese Communist Party that acknowledges the central figures of the Chinese political system. State broadcaster China Central Television broadcasted the list as part of Lunar New Year greetings.

Wei's predecessors, Chang Wanquan, Liang Guanglie, Cao Gangchuan, and Chi Haotian, were present on the list published on Wednesday, as first reported on Thursday by Hong Kong newspaper *South China Morning Post*. *Newsweek* independently confirmed that Wei Fenghe didn't appear on the list of prominent retired Chinese political figures.

In recent months, several leading military leaders from the People's Liberation Army's Rocket Force have also been replaced in recent months without explanation. Experts believe there is an extensive anti-corruption-related investigation currently underway in China's military and diplomatic circles, *Newsweek* previously reported.

Wei served as the defense minister of China from March 2018 until January 2023, replaced by former Defense Minister Li Shangfu. Wei officially retired that month.

He also previously served as the commander of Xi's elite Rocket Force, in charge of Beijing's nuclear arsenal, which has been mired in corruption allegations in recent months.

The scrutiny of Wei's absence from the list comes as China's leading military and diplomatic figures, including the former Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Foreign Defense Minister Li Shangfu, have disappeared from public view without explanation.

Qin and Li were officially removed from the State Council, China's chief administrative authority, according to state broadcaster CCTV, in October 2023. No official explanations were provided for their dismissal.

*Newsweek* reached out to the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., via email for comment on Wei's absence from the list.

Earlier in the year, Chinese leader Xi Jinping called the problem of corruption within the Chinese political system an ongoing effort. "After 10 years of unrelenting and powerful anti-corruption efforts in the new era, we have achieved an overwhelming victory and have comprehensively consolidated our achievements. However, the situation remains dire and complex," Xi told the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection members, the Communist Party's highest supervisory body.

Ou Si-fu, a research fellow and division director at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research, Taiwan's top military think tank, told *Newsweek* in a recent interview that corruption in the People's Liberation Army remains rampant.

"During the last two decades, Beijing has poured many budgets and resources into defense modernization. Owing to a shortage of transparency, many officials have cut a big slice of this defense fat for private purposes," Ou said.



China's increasing political influence in the south Pacific has sparked an international response

09 February 2024, [The Conversation](#)

Taiwan elected Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, to be its next president on January 13. His election marks the continuation of a government that promotes an independent Taiwan.

Just two days later, the Pacific nation of Nauru severed ties with Taiwan and transferred its diplomatic allegiance to Beijing. More recently, on January 27, Tuvalu's pro-Taiwan prime minister, Kausea Natano, lost his seat in the nation's general election. Natano's finance minister, Seve Paeniu, who is aiming for the prime ministership himself, was returned to his seat. In his campaign, Paeniu pledged to review Tuvalu's relationships with China and Taiwan.

These examples indicate China's growing influence in the south Pacific, a region that the world's major powers are competing for influence over. But why is the region significant? And how are these major powers exerting their influence there?

#### **Preventing recognition of Taiwan**

Taiwan has been governed independently since 1949. But Beijing believes it should be reunited with the rest of China. It is not an option for states to diplomatically recognise both China and Taiwan – China forces them to choose.

For decades, the Chinese government has used a combination of carrots and sticks to pressure such states into transferring diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China.

China has, for example, imposed significant political, diplomatic and economic sanctions on countries that continue to formally recognise Taiwan. In 2022, China curbed imports from Lithuania to punish the country for allowing Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in the country.

But China also offers states – and their governing elites – economic and political incentives for withdrawing diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. It has, in the past, used its influence in the UN and other international

organisations to block assistance or elect specific people to international positions.

Nauru's change of diplomatic position, and the political debate unfolding in Tuvalu, should be understood as part of China's longstanding effort to prevent and reduce recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state.

But they are a significant step forward for China. Nauru has a leading position in the Pacific Islands Forum – the main political decision-making body for the region – so the country's change of stance could lead to wider formal diplomatic changes in the south Pacific. China, of course, has legitimate economic and political interests in the south Pacific too. It is a vital export market for natural resources from Pacific island states and is a key source of incoming tourism. According to Chinese statistics, total trade volume between China and Pacific island states grew from US\$153 million (£121 million) to US\$5.3 billion (£4.2 billion) between 1992 and 2021.

#### **Competing for influence**

Nauru's decision is another diplomatic setback for Taiwan, which is now formally recognised by just 11 countries. However, this is not in itself a serious concern for the US, Australia and their allies.

They all formally recognise China, while at the same time maintaining close, informal links with Taiwan. Their focus is on trying to limit the depth of Chinese political and economic influence over Pacific island states and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region. The US is concerned that growing Chinese political influence may ultimately result in it enjoying significant military presence in the region.

The Pacific region encompasses the US state of Hawaii, multiple US territories, and is also home to several crucial US military bases. So, the US has made an effort to enhance its diplomatic relations in the region by providing financial support for initiatives around climate change adaptation, sustainable fishing and economic growth.

However, increased tension between China and the west over the past decade has made it increasingly challenging to reign in Chinese



influence. China has been asserting its primacy in and around Taiwan in the South China Sea, and has increasingly exerted military pressure. China's struggle for influence in the region now also includes taking opportunities to challenge previously undisputed western security dominance in the south Pacific. In 2022, China put forward a proposal for a diplomatic, economic and security agreement with the region. The agreement was, however, later abandoned due to resistance from some Pacific island nations at the urging of the US and Australia.

### **US strategy in the south Pacific**

When president, Donald Trump launched a number of deals with Pacific islands including Nauru, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Palau and Micronesia. However, Trump's strategy for a "free and open Indo-Pacific" had limited success. This was not only due to his confrontational posture towards China, but also to his threatening and protectionist "America first" rhetoric.

Joe Biden's comparatively measured diplomacy has seen more success. In 2022, the Biden administration announced its "Pacific partnership strategy".

The initiative included a commitment of US\$810 million in development aid across the Pacific island region. And in May 2023, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, stated that he would work with Congress to provide over US\$7.2 billion to support the region.

Since then, the US has recognised the Cook Islands and Niue as independent, sovereign nations, increased its diplomatic footprint in the region and has committed strongly to work with the Pacific Islands Forum to promote a "democratic, resilient and prosperous Pacific islands region".

The shift of diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China does not mean that Pacific island nations want to reduce their ties with the west. But the US, Australia and their allies will need to invest a lot more in diplomatic, economic and security assistance if they want to counter China's growing influence there.

Chinese security agencies tell students studying abroad to beware risk from foreign spies

07 February 2024, [South China Morning Post](#)

China's top spy agency has warned Chinese students to be alert to the risk from foreign spies when studying abroad.

The warning from the Ministry of State Security comes amid a sweeping national security drive. In a post on the ministry's WeChat account it told the story of a "real case" involving a Chinese graduate who, it claimed, had secured a place from a "top ranking" foreign university despite failing the Chinese college entrance exam in 2006.

It said the student, identified only by the surname Zhang, had been "severely punished" for his role in leaking Chinese scientific research after graduating.

The ministry did not say where Zhang had studied, but it said he had been responsible for liaising with Chinese students abroad and had done well in his studies, which brought him to the attention of a senior figure in the university. This individual was then said to have put Zhang in touch with two people who turned out to be foreign spies and convinced him to provide intelligence on Chinese international students and other "sensitive information" in return for money.

The account said these spies had secured Zhang a job in a Chinese research institution in China, even though he did not have the correct credentials, and told him to appear to be helpful to his colleagues to collect information. The State Security Ministry said Zhang had "squandered his promising future" by giving in to the foreign intelligence agency's "emotional manipulation and monetary temptation".

It warned the public to be alert to national security risks and "uncover the hidden motives behind various seemingly innocent interactions" while studying and travelling abroad.

In recent months the Chinese authorities have heightened their focus on risks to national security, with the state security ministry

becoming more active on social media to warn of the threat from foreign spies.

Last year, State Security Minister Chen Yixin said the country must “proactively defend” against foreign spies to strengthen national security and the Communist Party’s leadership. A new counter-espionage law came into effect in July 2023, which expanded both the definition of spying and the investigative powers of national security agencies.

Although China and the United States recently pledged to boost academic exchanges as part of a wider effort to improve relations, Chinese students in America are still at risk of being caught up in the wider tensions between the countries.

Recently China accused the US authorities of harassing Chinese students on arrival at Washington’s Dulles airport, subjecting them to lengthy questioning and trying to turn them into spies.

According to China’s education ministry, more than 8 million students have studied abroad in the period between 1978 and the end of 2021, with the US, Britain and Singapore as the most popular destinations.

China expands visa exemption policy to attract more foreigners

04 February 2024, [RFA](#)

China has expanded its visa-free entry policy for tourists and business travelers from more than a dozen European and Asian countries, opening up its borders further in recent months as it struggles to shore up foreign interests to help arrest an economic slowdown. In January, the Chinese government announced that it would provide unilateral visa exemption for Ireland and Switzerland and introduce a mutual visa exemption for Singapore for 30 days. Additionally, from March 1, China and Thailand will also allow permanent visa exemption for citizens of both sides. In the past six months, Beijing has implemented a visa-free policy to tourists from Brunei, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia.

While the number of foreign tourist arrivals has jumped nearly seven times to 35.5 million last year from 4.5 million in 2022, it’s still a far cry from the 98 million recorded in pre-pandemic 2019, according to China’s National Immigration Administration.

But foreign nationals would be hesitant to travel to China for several factors: the high cost of air tickets, the inconveniences upon arrival without a Chinese mobile phone number – which is needed for mobile payment apps as many businesses and restaurants do not take cash – as well as being closely surveilled and controlled by the authorities.

“I recently returned to China and the biggest inconvenience was that overseas credit cards are difficult to use in China. China’s WeChat Pay or Alipay require a Chinese domestic WeChat account to install,” an Australian citizen surnamed Yang lamented to Radio Free Asia.

“Moreover, without a mobile phone number in China, I can’t even hail a taxi. I have to ask someone to hail one for me every time.”

Yang said another issue was the close surveillance he endured.

After registering for accommodation with the neighborhood police station – a requisite – the neighborhood committee cadres would come to verify, and also inform him they knew of his comings and goings from the residence.

“It was nothing more than a warning to me: the Public Security Bureau is closely monitoring my every move and deliberately putting pressure on me.”

Not only was Yang under close surveillance, but his work partners were not spared either.

“I used my Australian mobile phone in China to make a call to a boss in Zhejiang to discuss possible cooperation. A few hours after the call, the lady was summoned to the police station. The police told her that it was an overseas fraud call and made a record. She was so scared that she never dared to answer my call again.”

Yang added he was scarred from the experience and would try to avoid going to China, which he described as “a hysterical country.”

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A CCTV security surveillance camera overlooks a street as people walk past in Beijing, China. (Thomas Peter/Reuters)

### **Costly airfares and politics**

A woman who works in the United States and only gave her name as Angela said the air ticket price from the U.S. to China remains high, although a slight decline allowed her to return last month.

Angela said that compared to her experience three years ago, the Chinese government has stepped up its controls on the people.

“One thing that makes it very inconvenient is: everywhere I go, I am being checked for my identity – be it to get on the high-speed rail, book a ticket for a tourist attraction, and even to register a shared bike account. The purpose of this is probably to collect and control information and capture everyone's whereabouts, but it is very annoying.”

Separately, a travel agent in the U.S. who only gave her surname Cai noted that middle-aged and elderly overseas Chinese are reluctant to travel to China because of the political environment.

“It’s not that we don’t do business in the Chinese market -- now is not the right time, whether it is political or other factors.”

Beijing is trying to rebuild its international image and trust with the international community, and the visa-free policy was one of the measures to improve relations with foreign countries, said Riley Walters, a senior researcher on international economics at the Hudson Institute, a Washington-based think tank.

“The slowdown in the economy and stock market has made China’s demand for foreign investment high. Relaxing visa restrictions will also help the tourism industry,” Walters said.

But how effective Beijing’s visa-free policy will be in shoring up foreign investment remains to be seen.

Ralph Weber, a professor from the European Center for Global Studies at the University of Basel in Switzerland, believes the policy will have a limited effect on attracting business travelers.

“Investors are hesitant to go to China because they feel uneasy. They’re worried about what’s happening in China, like the espionage laws. So the impact created by the visa-free policy is not worth mentioning. I can’t imagine a Swiss business traveler thinking, ‘Wow, I now don’t have to pay for a Chinese visa, so I’m going to invest in China.’ That’s not the logic,” Weber said.

China’s actual foreign direct investment fell 8% to 1.13 trillion yuan (US\$159 billion) last year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

[China to strengthen propaganda control on discussion of ethnic minority issues](#)

03 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Sounding the urgency to realise President Xi Jinping’s vision of “forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation,” a top policy

office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) has pledged to tighten control of ethnic minority-related discussions on the internet and in print. The aim is to stamp out what the office calls ideological risks related to the minorities especially in Xinjiang and Tibet, reported the *scmp.com* Feb 2, citing the Communist Party’s theoretical journal *Qiushi* on Feb 1.

The article, written under the byline of the Communist Party leadership group at the National Ethnic Affairs Commission, the office responsible for drafting and implementing laws regarding China’s policies towards its ethnic minority groups, has called for greater oversight of public opinion and discussion around ethnic minority groups and related issues online.

The article is stated to refer to “risks” arising from ethnic minority communities and to call for what is called “the responsibility mechanism of ideology work” to be implemented.

“[We must] resolutely fend off the infiltration of the ‘three forces,’” referring to terrorism, separatism and religious extremism. “[We must] further regulate publication related to ethnic minority groups,” the article is quoted as saying.

The commission has called for greater supervision, for officials to “promptly and appropriately” address grievances involving issues related to ethnic minority groups, and to “absolutely uphold the bottom line of preventing regional and systemic risks in the ethnic regions”.

In addition to a call for greater control, the article is stated to endorse more resources being put into art – such as in publications, on stage and visual arts – which could help ethnic minority groups identify more deeply with Chinese culture.

“[We] should aim to make the internet the biggest contributor to strengthening the awareness of the community of the Chinese nation,” it is quoted as saying.

The remarks are seen to have come as Beijing stresses the need to realise President Xi’s vision

of “forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation”, which advocates for greater integration of ethnic minority groups and putting the interests of the Chinese nation first. The report notes that grievances relating to ethnic minority groups have long been a major source of tension in Chinese society, particularly in Xinjiang and Tibet.

While Beijing has largely tamped down the intensity of those tensions in recent years by tightening its grip on the regions’ security and culture policies, its measures have attracted massive criticisms for human rights abuses, the report said.

It bears noting that major issues highlighted in these criticisms have included re-education camps and forced labour incarceration of around a million mostly Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang and the forced enrolment of around a million Tibetan children in forced colonial schools designed to Sinicize them.

Given these foreign criticisms, the article in *Qiushi* has said China’s external communication around its ethnic minority groups was not effective, claiming Beijing “has a valid point but not able to effectively communicate it”.

Without naming any countries, it has said this was because of some countries’ “hegemonic dominance”.

The article has noted that in recent times Beijing had stepped up efforts in the hope that its global communication would better align with its narrative.

The report says that one example of this is Beijing’s dramatically increased use since last year of “Xizang” rather than “Tibet” in its English articles in Chinese state media. It sees the term “Tibet” as being linked in international discussion to the region’s spiritual leader-in-exile, the Dalai Lama.

## China in the Region

### China-Nepal

China’s continued Covid closure of Nepal-Tibet border separates families, affects livelihoods

14 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The Covid-19 pandemic may have long ceased to be a matter of serious concern across the world, but not so to the Chinese government as far as its occupied Tibet’s border area with Nepal is concerned. Officials in Tibet say they are still awaiting Beijing’s permission to reopen the border, which was shut in Jan 2020 to tame the Covid pandemic, reported the *kathmandupost.com* Feb 14.

The Chinese government closed Tiptala Bhanjyang near the Nepal-Tibet border in Taplejung amid the coronavirus threat in Jan 2020. Due to the protracted border closure, hundreds of locals in the northern villages of Taplejung have been unable to meet their relatives in Tibet for four years now, the report said.

The Riu settlement of Dinggye County of Tibet lies just across the border – 35 km from the border. “But I have not been able to visit my maternal home for the past four years. The way to my maternal village is inaccessible as the Nepal-China border remains closed for a long time,” the report quoted Paten Sherpa, wife of Temba and a permanent resident of Olangchungola in ward 7 of Phaktanglung Rural Municipality, as saying.

Bhomo Sherpa of Mauwatar in Olangchungola share a similar ordeal. She was born in Tibet, married Bhujung of Nepal’s Bhotkhola Rural Municipality in Sankhuwasabha district. The couple later migrated to Mauwatar and began rearing yaks. While they are happy with their income and three children’s education, Bhomo’s only complaint is that the border has become a barrier preventing her from meeting her parents in Tibet.

Before the pandemic, both Temba and Bhujung frequently visited Tibetan markets for trade,



transporting various goods on yaks. During their visits, they formed connections with Tibetan girls, whom they eventually brought back as life partners. “We never imagined that the border would close some day leaving us unable to visit our relatives,” Bhujung has said. “We have to walk for five to seven hours just to make a phone call to my maternal relatives in Riu. It would take me less time to reach my maternal home than to get to Olangchungola. But the closed border is a barrier in my way,” Paten, who is in her mid-forties, has said.

Tsering Kipa, in her early seventies and living in Olangchungola with her husband Dandu Sherpa, also has a strong desire to reunite with her maternal family in Tibet, the report said. But the close of the border remains an agonizing barrier standing in her way.

Chheten Sherpa Lama, ward chairman of ward 7 of Phaktalung Rural Municipality, has said there are at least 18 women in Olangchungola and Yangma settlements who have their maternal homes in Tibet. He has said there are many Tibetan women married to Nepali men from Ghunsa, Phale, Mikkakhola among other settlements as well.

“We have discussions with the representatives of the (Dinggye County in Tibet) county. They tell us that the border will reopen once they get permission from the centre (Beijing). The government of Nepal should talk to the central government of China,” Chheten has said, adding his own efforts thus far have been unsuccessful.

The report said trans-border trade and animal husbandry had been hugely affected by the border closure. People living near the Nepal-China border rely on Tibet for their daily essential commodities, as the area has yet to be connected to Nepal’s national road network. Tibet also serves as a major market for them to sell a variety of products including medicinal herbs and domesticated animals, the report said.

Govt highlights special initiatives in cross-border trade with China: Prime Minister Dahal  
10 February 2024, [Khabarhub](#)



*Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' inaugurating the Nepal Trans Himalaya Border Commerce Association's 24th General Assembly on Saturday/Photo: RSS*

Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' has asserted that his government has undertaken special initiatives in the operation of trade routes with China.

Addressing the 24th general assembly of the Nepal Trans Himalaya Border Commerce Association, Prime Minister Dahal emphasized the increased priority given to the initiation and systematic management of international and commercial routes between Nepal and China.

He claimed that since becoming the Prime Minister for the third time, he has given more priority than ever to initiating and organizing international and commercial routes between Nepal and China.

The Prime Minister also revealed plans to open traditional trade routes, develop the DPR of the Tokha-Chhahare-Tunnel Way, and prioritize immediate advancements in relation to the construction of the Hilsa-Simikot road.

The President of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI), Chandra Prasad Dhakal, also urged the government to prioritize the construction of the Kerung-Tatopani road, considering it crucial for cross-border trade.

Dhakal pointed out the comparative weakness of Nepal’s road infrastructure leading to trade routes with China.

He expressed the need for the government to expedite and organize the first road network

systematically, making it more convenient for business and trade with China.

Chinese Citizen Found Dead in Kathmandu Hostel: Investigation Underway

04 February 2024, [BNN](#)

In a grim revelation from the heart of Kathmandu, a 47-year-old Chinese citizen, **Bao Guanglai**, was found dead at the Nepalaya Home Hostel in Thamel on February 3. Having resided there since January 10, Bao's death has sent shockwaves through the hostel's community and beyond. The hostel staff, who discovered the lifeless body, promptly notified the police.

#### **Police Investigation Underway**

Upon arrival, law enforcement embarked on initial investigations into the circumstances of Bao's demise. Thus far, nothing suspicious has been unearthed. Police officials have been meticulous in their probe, leaving no stone unturned to unravel the circumstances leading to this unfortunate event. Bao's recent use of medication has been noted, though its relevance to his death remains unclear.

#### **Chinese Embassy Notified**

In the wake of Bao's death, the Chinese embassy in Nepal has been informed. This marks an essential step in the protocol, ensuring that the deceased's home country is aware of the tragic incident. It also enables them to provide any necessary support to the investigation and in dealing with the aftermath of the event.

#### **Autopsy to Determine Cause of Death**

With the cause of death still shrouded in uncertainty, Bao's body has been transferred to the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital in Maharajgunj. An autopsy is scheduled, aiming to shed light on the events leading to his sudden demise. The results of the autopsy will provide crucial insights into the actual cause of death.

While the investigation continues, this incident has thrown a spotlight on the safety of Chinese citizens in Nepal, sparking discussions and concerns among both local and international

communities. As the story unfolds, the hope is that clarity will prevail, providing closure for all those affected by Bao's untimely passing.

## **China-Pakistan**

Pakistan 'secures' \$2 billion loan rollover from China

28 February 2024, [The News](#)

*Rollover to support SBP depleting foreign reserves stand at \$8 billion*

ISLAMABAD: In a major boost to the country's foreign exchange reserves, China has rolled over \$2 billion to Pakistan, Ministry of Finance sources told *Geo News* on Wednesday.

Pakistan has borrowed \$2 billion from China on a 7.1% interest rate, the sources said, adding that the loan was maturing in the week of March.

The sources said Pakistan paid Rs26.6 billion in the last fiscal year to China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on the \$9 billion deposits that these three nations placed with the State Bank of Pakistan.

The rollover will support the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) depleting foreign reserves which stand at \$8 billion.

Last month, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar wrote a letter to his Chinese counterpart Li Qiang, seeking the rollover of a \$2 billion loan.

In his letter to China's premier, the interim prime minister has requested that Beijing roll over Pakistan's \$2 billion loan for a year, sources had told *Geo News*.

PM Kakar, in his letter to the Chinese premier, also thanked the Chinese government for financial support, the finance ministry sources said.

The sources, citing the letter, stated: "China gave a loan to the government of Pakistan in a difficult economic situation."

A total of \$4 billion worth of funds in loans, as per the sources, has been kept as a safe deposit, which has reduced Pakistan's external payments burden.

Last year in May, Beijing came to Pakistan's rescue during its struggle to secure the critical pending loan from the International Monetary

Fund (IMF), as the Chinese government rolled over more than \$2 billion in debt.

The friendly neighbour had committed to help Islamabad meet two crucial debt repayments in June worth \$2.3 billion by providing fresh funds immediately after Pakistan was to make the payments.

"The refinancing of the commercial loans worth \$1.3 billion and a Chinese government loan of \$1 billion would help Pakistan avert immediate default," a senior government official told *The News* in May 2023.

Earlier last year, China had already rolled over some loans to Pakistan and Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang also reiterated Beijing's financial support for the country on a visit to Pakistan back in May last year.

**Pakistan exports to South China increase by 16pc in 2023**  
23 February 2024, [The Nation](#)

Pakistan's exports to South China have witnessed a significant surge of 16 percent during the year 2023. This remarkable achievement comes as a result of the strengthened trade ties between the two countries and Pakistan's ongoing efforts to diversify its export market, said Muhammad Irfan, Trade and Investment Counsellor Pakistan's Consulate in Guangzhou, China.

According to the latest data released by the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC), the total value of exports from Pakistan to South China reached a record high of \$973.21 million from January-December of 2023, compared to \$836.645 million in the previous year. This upward trajectory is a testament to the resilience and competitiveness of Pakistan's export sector.

Guangdong province imported \$379.011 million worth of goods from Pakistan in 2023, while Fujian province imported \$367.30 million. On the other hand, imports in the previous year were 248.532 million, up by 48 percent, followed by the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region's 86.790 million and \$80.164 million, up by 8 percent, in 2022. In 2023, Hainan province imported goods worth

\$85.883 million, with a 56 percent increase, and in 2022, its imports were \$24.371 million, increased by 123 percent to \$54.227 million, he told China Economic Net (CEN).

He further said that the surge in exports to South China can be attributed to various factors, including the preferential trade agreement between Pakistan and China, known as the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (CPFTA).

This agreement has eliminated or significantly reduced tariffs on a wide range of goods, making Pakistani products more affordable and competitive in the Chinese market.

Due to the significant participation of Chinese participants in two major events held in Pakistan, the Food and Agriculture Exhibition and TEXPO 2023, Pakistan's exports to South China surged by 69 percent in the second half of 2023. The key sectors contributing to Pakistan's export growth in South China include textiles, leather products, seafood, and agricultural commodities. Sesame seed, rice textiles, and garments, in particular, have witnessed a significant surge in demand, as Pakistani textile manufacturers have managed to produce high-quality products at competitive prices Irfan mentioned.

He further said that the Pakistani government has also played a vital role in promoting exports to South China by providing various incentives and support to exporters. These include subsidised loans, export financing schemes, and trade exhibitions to showcase Pakistani products in the Chinese market. Furthermore, the geographical proximity of South China to Pakistan has facilitated the smooth flow of goods, reducing transportation costs and time. This advantage has allowed Pakistani exporters to deliver their products more efficiently and gain a competitive edge over other countries. It is to be noted that the total exports of Pakistan to China from 2021-2023 increased by 1.4 percent on year-on-year basics.

Irfan added that the increase in exports to South China is beneficial for Pakistan's economy and helps in bridging the trade imbalance between the two countries. Historically,

Pakistan has been heavily reliant on imports from China, and the export surge has helped to reduce this dependency and create a more balanced trade relationship.

China Endorses 'Successful' Pakistan Polls With Big Thumbs Up to Army Amid Rigging Claims  
21 February 2024, [News18](#)

In what appears to be a clear endorsement of the February 8 polls, China has congratulated Pakistan on its 'successful elections,' even as controversy brews over alleged rigging. Speaking at a regular press conference on Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning commended Pakistan's handling of the polls.

"As a close and friendly neighbour, China fully respects the choice of the Pakistani people and sincerely hopes that relevant parties of Pakistan will work together to uphold political solidarity and social stability after the elections and jointly open up a brighter future for the development of the country," Ning said in response to a question posed by China News Service on Pakistan elections.

"China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners. China hopes to work with Pakistan to build on the traditional friendship, deepen practical cooperation in various areas, and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries," the Chinese spokesperson added.

Answering a question about the absence of a decisive mandate, Ning said, "We noted that general elections in Pakistan are held in a generally steady and smooth manner and we fully respect the choice of the Pakistani people. We hope and believe that relevant parties of Pakistan will uphold solidarity, maintain stability and properly handle relevant issues to jointly open up a brighter future for the development of the country."

The statement is viewed as support for Pakistan's military establishment, countering US criticism of election integrity. "China's statement is out of turn to calm down the controversy going on due to election rigging," said top Pakistan govt sources. They told *CNN-News18* that this endorsement challenges voices like Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Imran Khan, indicating China's preference for stability over democratic processes.

It also signals the approval of Army Chief Gen Asim Munir's leadership. While aimed at calming tensions in the debt-ridden country, China's intervention underlines its strategic interests in its "all-weather" partner. The move also highlights tensions between China and the US regarding democratic norms and regional influence, potentially impacting future diplomatic relations between the countries.

Pak-China friendship strengthening with passage of time: SCCI  
15 February 2024, [Pakistan Today](#)

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq said there is no doubt that Pak-China friendship is unmatched which is further strengthening with the passage of time and its example, is that events are arranging on eve of new Chinese year across the Pakistan and everyone is participating in happiness of Chinese brother and sisters.

Fuad Ishaq was speaking at an event at China Window Peshawar and inauguration of a culture exhibition, arranged by students of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (SBBWUP), held in connection with China New Year here on Thursday.

The SCCI chief praised artwork and paintings of the students displayed during the exhibition and said citizens of Peshawar will get aware about Chinese culture through this event.

He said Pakistan and China are tied with strong trade, cultural and tourism relationships, and its example wasn't found anywhere in the world.



China and its people have always extended support to Pakistan in their difficult situation, he added.

Fuad Ishaq noted Pakistan and China relationship has touched new heights owing to unflinching leadership of the two countries and vigorous efforts initiated by government from both sides, particularly CPEC had further strengthened bilateral trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

The chamber president opined that CPEC is a game changer, which would bring economic prosperity and development in the whole region and stressed the need for early completion of projects under CPEC.

He said technology transformation is highly crucial in CPEC.

The SCCI chief hoped both countries would take every possible measure to further improve bilateral trade and economic relations.

Fuad Ishaq appreciated the China Window for arranging events on eve of China New Year and said the Chinese Culture Centre in Peshawar will prove a milestone in strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. Later, the SCCI chief visited the culture exhibition and lauded artwork and paintings of students of SBBWU Peshawar.

On the occasion, Fuad Ishaq also distributed certificates among students of the SBBWU Peshawar.

#### **Nepal's Office of Tibet Celebrates Losar**

14 February 2024, [CTA](#)

The Office of Tibet, Nepal held a Losar celebration on the third day of the first month of Tibetan lunar calendar that falls on 12 February 2024 with the presence of chief guest Kyabje Chusang Rinpoche, special guest Representative Tsepri Lopan Tulku Ngawang Chokdup, Tibetan MPs and former Tibetan MPs, Secretary of the Office of Tibet, President of the Local Tibetan Assembly, Tibetan Settlement Officers, President of the Local Tibetan Freedom Movement and representatives of NGOs.

Also in attendance were abbots of monasteries, diplomats from Australia, USA, and others including monastics and laity. The celebration was observed without any restrictions by the government of Nepal. It concluded with the presentation of cultural performances at Srongsen Bhrikuti Boarding High School by the Nepal Tibetan Lhamo Association.

#### **China remains Pakistan's top trade partner amid falling exports to US and EU**

13 February 2024, [The News](#)

KARACHI: Pakistan's exports to high-priced European and North American markets fell in the first half of the 2023/24 fiscal year, while China remained its top trading partner, data from the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) showed on Monday.

Exports to the United States, traditionally one of Pakistan's biggest markets, did not rank among the top 25 destinations in the six months to December, according to the TDAP review of external trade.

According to review, Chinese market remained the biggest market for the Pakistani, which imported 66 percent higher goods from Pakistan in July-December of this fiscal.

On the other hand, exports to United Kingdom (UK) posted growth of six percent in the first six months. The exports to most of the members of European Union (EU) countries showed negative growth in the period.

The review showed that exports to Germany fell by fourteen percent and exports to Netherlands sharply declined by 14.5 percent in the months under review. Exports to Italy posted negative growth of 5.3 percent and it fell by 1.2 percent to Spain.

Exports to France and Belgium posted negative growth of 7 and 9.5 percent respectively whereas exports to Denmark rose by nine percent during the period under review.

Country's exports to Middle East market showed mixed performance as the exports to Saudi Arabia recorded substantial growth of 27 percent, however fell by over five percent to United Arab Emirates.



In South Asian region, country's exports to Afghanistan fell by over five percent and down by over three percent to Bangladesh. Exports to Sri Lanka posted growth of two percent.

In Far East market, exports to Japan fell by over ten percent and were up by fifty six percent to Philippines. Exports to Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam showed growth of 190, 100 and 79 percent respectively.

In African market, exports to Tanzania were up by 47 percent and fell by 4.5 percent to Kenya in the first half of this financial year.

During the first half of this financial year, the total exports of the country recorded 5.17 percent growth to \$ 14.981 billion compared to \$14.244 billion in the corresponding period of last fiscal.

The major commodities exported included textile & leather, down by six percent, agro & food up by 39 percent, minerals & petroleum up by 9.5 percent, metals, gems & other precious metals up by 33 percent and chemical, fertilizer & pharma down by 18.8 percent in the first half of this financial year.

## China-Xinjiang

Spokesperson: Attempts to create 'forced decoupling' in Xinjiang will not succeed

20 February 2024, [Xinhua](#)

Attempts from certain political forces to create "a forced decoupling, forced unemployment and a forced return to poverty" in Xinjiang under the pretext of human rights will not succeed, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Monday.

Spokesperson Mao Ning made the remarks at a regular news briefing in response to a related query.

Some German companies, including Volkswagen and BASF, are reportedly considering divesting their business interests in Xinjiang due to concerns about so-called "forced labor" and "detention camps" in the region.

Mao said that during the Munich Security Conference, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi noted that certain political forces have spread

too many lies about Xinjiang and produced too much disinformation for the world, and that "forced labor" is one such example. Such lies about Xinjiang aim to cause disruption, thereby preventing China's development and revitalization, Wang also said.

Mao said that Xinjiang now enjoys social stability, economic development, ethnic unity and religious harmony, and that the rights and interests of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang are protected effectively.

"We hope relevant companies will respect the facts, distinguish right from wrong, and cherish the opportunity to invest and develop in Xinjiang," Mao said.

[China's Inviting Sympathetic Foreign Media to Xinjiang Can Backfire](#)

21 February 2024, [VOA](#)

Albanian Canadian scholar Olsi Jazexhi seemed to be the perfect foreign writer for the Chinese government to invite to Xinjiang, its westernmost province and home to the ethnic Uyghur Muslim minority so mistreated by Beijing that its critics have called it cultural genocide.

"My initial intention was to visit Xinjiang myself to investigate and to prove the West wrong," Jazexhi tells VOA.

During an interview for a journalist visa at the Chinese Embassy in Tirana, Albania, in 2019, he says he told the consular official, "I want to produce a story where I can show the world that all this talk about the Uyghur is in a way orchestrated, and by people in the West. And there is nothing true about it."

Since 2018, Beijing has been inviting diplomats, journalists, and writers like Jazexhi on controlled tours of western Xinjiang province as part of its efforts to tell the world that all is well, despite what the U.N. says are China's possible crimes against humanity committed against the Uyghurs.

Chinese state media says that more than 1,200 people from 100 countries and regions, including officials from international organizations, diplomats, journalists and

religious leaders, have visited Xinjiang from the end of 2018 to February 2021.

State media often quote those who go on the tours as they extol what is presented to them as the region's economic development and religious freedom, while attacking Western media and governments for "peddling disinformation" and publishing "fake news" about re-education camps where Uyghurs are tortured and forced to abandon their religious and cultural practices.

Jazexhi should have been one of them.

The Chinese government took him and 19 other writers, mainly from Muslim countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the UAE, on an all-expenses paid, 10-day trip in Xinjiang to visit factories and farms and show China's efforts in Xinjiang's economic development.

Ilshat Hassan Kokbore, director of China affairs at the rights group World Uyghur Congress, told VOA that Chinese authorities invite foreign media to visit Xinjiang and ensure "they will only see the singing and dancing performances of Uyghurs on the stage, but not the blood and tears of Uyghurs struggling in concentration camps and prisons."

But in Beijing's effort to dismiss the allegations of abuse, they also took Jazexhi's group to what they called a "vocational training center" where ethnic Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks were not allowed to leave and told him they were taken there for practicing Islam.

"So what the Chinese government was doing, it was jailing these people. And in this, the vocational centers there were forcing them to renounce Islam," Jazexhi said.

Jazexhi said the group also saw posters of Chinese President Xi Jinping in mosques in Aksu and Kashgar, which violate Islamic precepts against images of idolatry. While in Urumqi they saw a mosque converted into a shopping mall.

Jazexhi said he was not the only Muslim in his group, which included Turkish and Arab reporters, who were shocked. But he was the only one who condemned the detention

conditions while others told the outside world there were no rights violations in Xinjiang.

Jazexhi said several Arabs in his group told him they wouldn't publish stories about what they saw because it could create a diplomatic crisis between their countries and China.

He said that after he complained about the treatment to Chinese authorities, they called him a "fake journalist" and interrogated him as a suspected intelligence agent before he was released and left China.

VOA was not able to independently confirm Jazexhi's account of the trip, which he told to media and published on his YouTube channel. Liu Pengyu, the spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, denied that any so-called "re-education camps" exist in Xinjiang. In an email response to VOA, Liu called the vocational education and training centers in Xinjiang schools that are "no different from the Desistance and Disengagement Program of the U.K., or the de-radicalization centers in France." Liu said in 2019 "all trainees at the vocational education and training centers have completed their training, secured stable employment in the society and are living a normal life."

He then denounced "anti-China forces in the West, including the United States," for "fabricating and spreading a large amount of groundless disinformation about Xinjiang by distorting facts to smear China's image" and welcomed "interested foreign friends to visit Xinjiang to see with their own eyes all the changes and development that are truly happening there."

[China Urges Firms Not To Be 'Blinded By Lies' Over Xinjiang Rights Record](#)

15 February 2024, [Barron's](#)

China on Thursday urged companies not to be "blinded by lies" about its rights record in Xinjiang, after German automaker Volkswagen said it was discussing the future of its activities in the troubled region.

Rights campaigners have for years accused Beijing of a crackdown against Uyghurs and

other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, including through forced labour and detention camps.

Beijing denies allegations of abuse and insists its actions in Xinjiang have helped to combat extremism and enhance development.

Germany's Handelsblatt financial daily reported this week that forced labour may have been used to build a test track for VW in Turpan, Xinjiang in 2019.

VW said Wednesday it had seen no evidence of human rights violations in connection with the project but vowed to investigate any new information that came to light.

In a statement sent to AFP, Beijing's foreign ministry said allegations of abuses in the region were "entirely a lie concocted... with the aim of destabilising Xinjiang".

It urged firms to "respect the facts, distinguish right from wrong, and not be blinded by lies".

In an apparent sign of the growing pressure on VW over its presence in the region, the company said this week that it was in talks with its Chinese joint-venture partner SAIC "about the future direction of business activities in Xinjiang".

"Various scenarios are currently being intensively examined," VW said in a statement. Beijing said Thursday that "the human rights of people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang are protected to the maximum extent".

Claims of rights abuses in the northwestern region, it added, were aimed at "discrediting and suppressing China".

"Xinjiang currently enjoys social stability, economic development, ethnic unity, and religious harmony," the foreign ministry said.

Beijing stands accused of incarcerating over one million Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in a network of detention facilities across Xinjiang.

Campaigners and Uyghurs overseas have said an array of abuses take place inside the facilities, including torture, forced labour, forced sterilisation and political indoctrination. A UN report in 2022 detailed "credible" evidence of torture, forced medical treatment and sexual or gender-based violence -- as well as forced labour -- in the region.

But it stopped short of labelling Beijing's actions a "genocide", as the United States and some Western lawmakers have done.

Calls have grown louder for VW to reconsider its business activities in Xinjiang after German chemicals giant BASF announced last week that it would accelerate its exit from two joint ventures there.

Xinjiang is home to numerous factories that supply multinational companies, including big-name Western brands.

VW has long come under scrutiny over its factory in the city of Urumqi, which opened in 2013 and in which it has a stake via its partner SAIC.

An external audit commissioned by VW last year found no evidence of forced labour among the plant's 197 employees.

[Beijing orders 'Chinese characteristics' for new Xinjiang mosques](#)

08 February 2024, Times Of India

In a move that underscores the tightening state control over religious practices, authorities in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have mandated that newly constructed mosques must embody "Chinese characteristics." This directive is part of a broader strategy by Beijing to assert greater influence over religious institutions and practices within the region, a policy that has garnered significant international attention and criticism.

The regulations explicitly prohibit any organization or individual from compelling residents to engage in religious beliefs, signaling a continued effort to regulate religious expression tightly. This development is set against a backdrop of heightened surveillance and control measures in Xinjiang, where the Uyghur Muslim minority has faced increased scrutiny. International observers and human rights organizations have raised concerns over the treatment of Uyghurs in the region, citing allegations of forced labor, re-education camps, and a systematic campaign to dilute Uyghur cultural and

religious identity. These measures, while presented as efforts to foster a harmonious and unified national culture, have sparked debate about the implications for religious freedom and the rights of minority communities in China. This policy's ramifications extend beyond the architectural and aesthetic modifications of religious sites; they touch on the fundamental rights of individuals to practice their religion freely and without state interference. As Beijing continues to enforce these regulations, the international community remains watchful, concerned about the broader human rights implications in Xinjiang and across China.

How do 'Chinese characteristics' in Mosques affect religious practices? The introduction of "Chinese characteristics" in mosques within the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China represents a significant shift in the way religious practices are conducted and perceived. This policy, part of broader efforts to assimilate religious minorities into the national identity, has profound implications for the Uyghur Muslim community and their practice of Islam. Restructuring religious identity: By mandating that mosques incorporate "Chinese characteristics," the government seeks to redefine what it means to practice Islam in China. This initiative aligns religious expression more closely with the state's vision of Chinese culture and identity, potentially diluting the distinct religious and cultural practices of the Uyghur Muslims. State control over religion: The policy is indicative of the state's desire to exert control over religious institutions and practices. It reflects an approach that views religion through the lens of national security and social stability, leading to stricter oversight and regulation of religious activities. This can limit the ability of religious communities to practice their faith according to their traditions. Impact on community cohesion: The enforced changes can affect community cohesion, as mosques are central to communal religious life.

Altering the physical and ideological aspects of these spaces can estrange communities from their places of worship, impacting religious observance and social bonds within the community.

Preservation of cultural heritage: Critics argue that the policy threatens the preservation of Uyghur cultural and religious heritage. Mosques, with their unique architectural styles and practices, are an integral part of this heritage. The imposition of "Chinese characteristics" risks erasing these distinctive features, further marginalizing the Uyghur identity.

International criticism and diplomatic tensions: The policy has attracted international criticism, with human rights organizations and foreign governments expressing concerns over religious freedom and the rights of ethnic minorities in China. This has led to diplomatic tensions, with China defending its policies as necessary for national unity and counter-terrorism.

Relatives Of Ethnic Kazakhs Incarcerated In Xinjiang Resume Protest Near Chinese Consulate In Almaty  
08 February 2024, [Radio Free Europe](#)

ALMATY, Kazakhstan -- Relatives of several ethnic Kazakhs incarcerated in China's northwestern region of Xinjiang have resumed a protest near the Chinese Consulate in Kazakhstan's largest city, Almaty, as they demand that their relatives be released.

There was no violence reported at the February 8 protest, though police did not allow the participants to get close to the consulate building.

One of the protesters, 68-year-old Khalida Aqyt Khan, who said her two sons had been sentenced to 22 and 10 years in prison "simply because they are practicing Muslims," fainted and an ambulance was called to the site.

Representatives of the Chinese Consulate did not come out of the building to talk to the protesters. Police at the site refused to comment to RFE/RL.

Protesters in Almaty have regularly rallied near the Chinese Consulate since February 2021 to demand the release of relatives and loved ones imprisoned in Xinjiang for being practicing Muslims.

China has been accused of human rights violations against Kazakhs, Uyghurs and other mostly Turkic-speaking indigenous ethnic groups over the existence of mass detention camps in Xinjiang.

Beijing denies that the facilities are internment camps, saying its actions are aimed at combating terrorism, but people who have fled the province say those from the ethnic groups are undergoing "political indoctrination" at a network of facilities officially referred to as reeducation camps.

The Chinese Embassy has said that all ethnic Kazakhs incarcerated in Xinjiang are Chinese citizens and are being held for breaking Chinese laws.

Several relatives of the protesters were released and allowed to travel to Kazakhstan in recent years.

Kazakh authorities refrain from openly criticizing the policies of China, one of their main creditors.

The U.S. State Department has said that as many as 2 million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, and members of Xinjiang's other indigenous, mostly Muslim, ethnic groups have been taken to detention centers.

Kazakhs are the second-largest Turkic-speaking indigenous community in Xinjiang after Uyghurs. The region is also home to ethnic Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Hui, also known as Dungans. Han, China's largest ethnicity, is the second-largest community in Xinjiang.

## China-Hong Kong

Hong Kong is now over, says China's former good friend  
13 February 2024, [RFA](#)

Once seen as a good friend of China's and former chairman of Morgan Stanley in Asia, Stephen Roach has said Hong Kong is over, attributing the city's "demise" to its domestic

politics, China's structural problems and global developments namely worsening U.S.-China tensions.

"It pains me to admit it, but Hong Kong is now over," Roach wrote in a commentary in the Financial Times on Monday.

"Since the handover to China in 1997, the Hang Seng index has been basically flat, up only about 5%. Over that same period, the S&P 500 has surged more than fourfold; even mainland China's underperforming Shanghai Composite has far outdistanced the Hong Kong bourse."

Roach said the turning point for Hong Kong's decline was when former Chief Executive Carrie Lam introduced the extradition bill that triggered large-scale democratic demonstrations in 2019. Beijing's subsequent imposition of the national security law in 2020 "shredded any remaining semblance of local political autonomy," and cut the 50-year transition period to full Chinese takeover by half, he pointed out.

With the political change came an economic downturn on the back of waning confidence in the business and investment environment, as well as the legal framework, as reflected by foreigners, firms and even locals leaving the city.

According to Roach, Hong Kong's decline was due to a confluence of three factors. The first being local politics. A relatively stable environment was shaken by the 2019-2020 protests, which resulted in the Beijing-centric national security law.

Second was China's economic structural problems. While the Hong Kong stock market has always played a leveraging role in the mainland economy, the Chinese economy has recently "hit a wall". Structural problems, especially with high debt, deflation and an aging population, compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic and the real estate crisis, have weighed on the Hong Kong market. Global developments are also not helping, primarily the worsening U.S.-China rivalry since 2018. In addition, the United States' "friendshoring" campaign has put pressure on Hong Kong's Asian allies to choose sides



between the U.S. and China, driving a wedge between the city and its trading neighbors.

### **A “shock bomb”**

Financial commentator Ngan Po Kong described the commentary as a “shock bomb” which could prompt others to re-evaluate the political risks of doing business in Hong Kong, given Roach wasn’t just an investment banker, but holds sway in economic, political and business circles.

“Roach has been a ‘great friend’ of China’s for many years. He is basically optimistic about China's economic reform and opening up, whether it is political or financial market performance. You can say he is a representative of the mainstream voice on Wall Street, an important voice that represents investment banks and financial institutions,” Ngan said in a Radio Free Asia Cantonese talk show.

Separately, the American law firm Latham & Watkins LLP, is cutting off access to its international database for its Hong Kong lawyers this month, according to a separate FT report, citing unnamed sources familiar with the matter

The report said the move underscores the growing difficulties for multinational companies operating in Hong Kong, which made its name as an international financial hub, and comes after Beijing imposed anti-espionage and data laws restricting information flows out of China. The law firm is also separating the Hong Kong database from the rest of Asia to create a new database shared with the Beijing office, the report said. Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee has vowed to complete legislation of Article 23 of the Basic Law – Hong Kong’s mini constitution – with laws to prohibit acts of treason, secession, sedition and subversion against Beijing. Public consultation for the draft law ends this month.

[China says Messi's absence in Hong Kong match beyond 'realm of sports' as fury builds](#)

08 February 2024, [Reuters](#)

HONG KONG, Feb 8 (Reuters) - Chinese state media, Hong Kong politicians and some fans

swiftly condemned Argentine player Lionel Messi's participation in a match in Japan on Wednesday after staying on the bench just days earlier in a highly anticipated game in Hong Kong.

Many in the financial hub were dismayed on Sunday when the 36-year-old did not come onto the field during a much hyped Inter Miami match in front of a sell-out crowd, with fans demanding answers and a refund.

Miami head coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino said Messi was deemed unfit to play in Sunday's friendly in Hong Kong, but he came on as a 60th minute substitute against Vissel Kobe on Wednesday.

China's state-controlled Global Times said Messi's absence posed many questions on the differential treatment for Hong Kong.

"The match in Hong Kong became the only one in Messi's six pre-season friendly matches on this trip where he was absent. The situation ... has magnified these doubts and suspicions on the integrity of Inter Miami and Messi himself." Some mainland fans travelled 12 hours from Xinjiang to Hong Kong to see Messi, the Global Times wrote, with the disappointment of the government and fans "entirely understandable. The impact of this incident has far exceeded the realm of sports."

Messi apologised to his Chinese fans on Weibo, a Chinese platform similar to X, just ahead of the game on Wednesday, saying it was a real shame he was not able to play in Hong Kong due to an injury.

Messi apologised to his Chinese fans on Weibo, a Chinese platform similar to X, just ahead of the game on Wednesday, saying it was a real shame he was not able to play in Hong Kong due to an injury.

Hong Kong's Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau said in a statement that, like the fans, it was very disappointed that Messi could not play in Hong Kong due to injury.

"However three days later, Messi was able to play actively and freely in Japan ... the government hopes the organisers and teams can provide reasonable explanations."

Sports lawmaker Kenneth Fok said the incident "sprinkled salt wounds" on Hong Kong fans, while senior government advisor Regina Ip wrote on X that "Hong Kong people hate Messi, Inter-Miami and the black hand behind them, for the deliberate and calculate snub to Hong Kong."

Scott Wong, a 26-year-old cadet pilot, said that if Messi comes back to play in Hong Kong he would think twice before getting tickets, in case he is injured again. "All the backlash Inter Miami got, plus Messi, I think he feels like he needs to make up for it. That's why he promised to come back and play the game again."

China's Xi Jinping hails progress in integrating Hong Kong and Macau in speech ahead of Lunar New Year  
08 February 2024, [South China Morning Post](#)

Beijing has succeeded in further supporting the integration of Hong Kong and Macau with the mainland over the past year, Chinese President Xi Jinping said ahead of Lunar New Year.

Xi made the remarks at a state Lunar New Year gathering in Beijing on Thursday morning, according to official news agency Xinhua.

The annual gathering was hosted by Premier Li Qiang and attended by many serving and retired senior officials and generals, as well as a number of prominent scholars.

As he did in previous years, Xi mentioned Hong Kong and Macau, as well as Taiwan, in his speech.

"We have actively supported the better integration of Hong Kong and Macau into the overall development of the country," Xi said.

On Taiwan, he said Beijing had "strongly opposed separatist acts of Taiwan independence and interference by foreign forces, and resolutely defended the country's sovereignty, security and development interests".

William Lai Ching-te of Taiwan's independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party was elected the island's president last month, angering Beijing.

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William Lai Ching-te of Taiwan's independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party was elected the island's president last month, angering Beijing.

Domestically, he said the task of reform, development and maintaining stability in 2023 was "difficult and heavy".

Beijing regards Taiwan as part of its territory, to be reunified with the mainland by force if necessary. Most countries, including the United States, do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but Washington opposes any attempt to take the self-ruled island by force and is committed to supplying it with weapons.

In his speech, Xi described the international environment as "extraordinarily complicated", but he praised China's diplomacy in 2023, saying it had "brought certainty and positive energy to a world of change and chaos".

Domestically, he said the task of reform, development and maintaining stability in 2023 was "difficult and heavy".

He said a "good political ecology" had been consolidated over the past year by deepening the struggle against corruption.

An earlier tally by the Post showed that China's anti-corruption watchdog launched investigations into a record 45 senior officials last year, the most since Xi launched his anti-graft campaign in 2013.

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Xi also said Beijing had "resolutely implemented" a shift in Covid-19 control

measures and promoted “economic recovery and development”.

China lifted most of its Covid-19 restrictions in late 2022 and reopened its borders in early 2023. But its recovery lacked momentum as the economy was weighed down by a sluggish stock and property market and massive local debt.

Looking ahead to 2024, Xi said Beijing would “strengthen economic vitality, prevent and reduce risks, and enhance public expectations, so as to consolidate and strengthen the trend of economic recovery and improvement”.

## China-Taiwan

China Says Its Coast Guard Patrols Around Taiwan Islands 'Beyond Reproach'

27 February 2024, [US News](#)

BEIJING (Reuters) -China's government said on Wednesday that its coast guard patrols around a group of Taiwanese islands near the Chinese coast were "beyond reproach", and dismissed complaints the boarding of a Taiwan tourist boat had caused panic.

China's coast guard this month began regular patrols around the Taiwan-controlled Kinmen islands, which face China's Xiamen and Quanzhou cities, where two Chinese nationals died trying to flee Taiwan's coast guard after their boat entered prohibited waters.

Taiwan said last week a Taiwanese tourist boat operating from Kinmen had been boarded briefly by China's coast guard, triggering "panic", and that this week five Chinese ships entered prohibited or controlled waters.

Speaking at a regular news briefing in Beijing, Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, reiterated it does not recognise any off-limits waters around Kinmen for fishermen, and said that the coast guard did not cause alarm with boarding the tourist boat. "I don't think there is any issue of panic," Zhu said.

The coast guard carries out its official duties in "their own waters" in accordance with the law to maintain "normal order" and protect the

lives and of fishermen and travellers, she added.

"Civilized and transparent law enforcement is beyond reproach," Zhu said.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory despite the island's rejection, has been wary of efforts by Beijing to ramp up pressure on Taipei following last month's election of Lai Ching-te as president. Beijing considers Lai, who takes office in May, a separatist.

Taiwan has complained of repeated Chinese military activity near its territory.

On Wednesday, Taiwan's defence ministry said it had detected 15 Chinese military aircraft operating around the island carrying out "joint combat readiness patrols" with Chinese warships.

China recognises no sovereignty claims by Taiwan, and has accused Taiwan of acting "maliciously" by causing the deaths of the two Chinese nationals on the fishing boat, which had gotten too close to one of Kinmen's heavily fortified islets.

Taiwan has defended its action and accused China of failing to properly control its fishing boats and stop them entering Taiwan's waters around Kinmen, the site of frequent fighting during the height of the Cold War.

Zhu said Taiwan was to blame for its dangerous enforcement actions.

"The relevant parties in Taiwan should respect the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Strait have been operating in traditional waters for a long time, and stop seizing and detaining mainland fishing boats in a rough and dangerous manner."

Over 80% of Taiwanese favour maintaining status quo with China: Survey

24 February 2024, [Business Standard](#)

More than 80 per cent of Taiwanese people want to maintain the status quo with China, with those preferring to keep Taiwan's current status indefinitely rising sharply, while those who want independence have been dropping since 2020, according to the results of a survey

released on Friday, Central News Agency Taiwan reported.

In the survey titled "Changes in the Unification-Independence Stances of Taiwanese," National Chengchi University's Election Study Center, which has tracked the annual change in Taiwanese residents' stance on the issue from 1994-2023, said it saw increasing support for the continuation of cross-strait status quo.

The three most preferred choices in 2023 were: "maintain the status quo indefinitely" (33.2 per cent), "maintain the status quo, decide at a later date" (27.9 per cent) and "maintain the status quo, move toward independence" (21.5 per cent), according to the Center.

Added together, those three categories of people who either want to maintain the status quo for now or indefinitely accounted for 82.6 per cent of the total, Central News Agency Taiwan reported.

The least preferred option was "unification as soon as possible," which had never exceeded 5 per cent since the survey has been conducted and stood at only 1.2 per cent in 2023, according to the findings.

That category of people who want to "maintain the status quo, move toward unification," has dropped from the third highest percentage overall, or 15.6 per cent, in 1994, to 6.2 per cent in 2023.

Also, in 2023, only 3.8 per cent of respondents expressed a desire for Taiwan's immediate independence, making it the second least preferred option overall, with support over the decades never exceeding 7.8 per cent.

Central News Agency Taiwan reported that the percentage of people who want independence now and those who want it later have been steadily dropping since 2020. The two groups added together fell from a high of 32.1 per cent in 2020 to 25.3 per cent last year.

The fastest growing category of people were those who want to maintain the status quo indefinitely; it rose from 9.8 per cent in 1994 to 33.2 per cent last year, rising sharply since 2020.

It surpassed those who favored "maintain status quo, decide at later date" for the first time in 2022.

This survey was released in tandem with another one that tracked the year-on-year changes in how Taiwanese people identify themselves (as Taiwanese or Chinese) between 1992 and 2023.

That second survey showed that 61.7 per cent of Taiwanese in 2023 identified themselves as Taiwanese, falling a little from the record high of 64.3 per cent seen in 2020. That self-identification preference has ballooned from 17.6 per cent in 1992 to more than threefold last year, Central News Agency Taiwan reported.

Last year, around one third of respondents considered themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese, continuing a general downward trend from 46.4 per cent in 1992 to 32 per cent in 2023. But last year those who considered themselves to be Taiwanese and Chinese rose slightly from the record low of 29.9 per cent in 2020.

In contrast, significantly fewer people consider themselves to be simply Chinese, with the number falling from 25.5 per cent to 2.4 per cent over the past 30 years.

Only 3.9 per cent of respondents showed no response in 2023, down from 10.5 per cent in 1992.

According to the center, the surveys were conducted via telephone questionnaires with respondents ranging from 1,209 to 34,854 per year.

The center said it used key sample variables to weight the sample's partial characters such as sex, age, and education through an iterated (or raking) process to ensure the sample structure is representative of the population.

It did not provide the confidence level and margin of error.

Mainland China's top Taiwan official pledges support for pro-unification forces  
23 February 2024, [South China Morning Post](#)

Beijing's top Taiwan affairs official has called for more efforts to support pro-unification

forces and deepen cultural ties a month after the presidential election was won by an independence-leaning candidate.

Wang Huning, who heads the Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs, told the Taiwan Affairs Work Conference that this year its task was to “advance the process of reunification” and “maintain peace and stability” across the Taiwan Strait, state news agency Xinhua reported on Friday.

Wang, the No 4 in the Communist Party’s hierarchy, told officials they would also need to strike hard against Taiwan independence and interference by external forces.

Last month’s Taiwanese presidential election was won by William Lai Ching-te of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party – whom Beijing has repeatedly described as a dangerous separatist – as its next president. He will take office in May when current leader Tsai Ing-wen steps down.

Beijing has criticised Washington’s increased political support and arms sales to Taiwan as “external interference in China’s internal affairs”, and described them as the biggest obstacles to its reunification plan with Taiwan. Wang also told the conference that Beijing has “overcome difficulties” in pushing ahead its Taiwan agenda and winning international support for the “one China” principle - an apparent reference to Honduras and Nauru cutting their ties with Taipei in the past 12 months.

“It is necessary to expand cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation in various fields and deepen cross-Strait integration and development. We should push for joint Chinese culture promotions across the Taiwan Strait and promote spiritual bonds among Chinese compatriots,” he added.

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary. Most countries, including the US, do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state, but Washington is opposed to any attempt to take the self-governed island by force and is committed to supplying it with weapons.

As China will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China this year, Wang said Beijing will need to “further grasp the strategic initiative to achieve complete reunification of the motherland”.

In contrast to his speech last year, this time Wang did not refer to “one family across the Taiwan Strait” or of Beijing’s efforts to “promote policies benefiting the Taiwanese people”.

Instead, he said Beijing would “firmly support patriotic and pro-unification forces on the island and unite Taiwan compatriots”.

In December, Beijing suspended tariff cuts on 12 products imported from Taiwan, a decision it blamed on the DPP’s stance, and threatened more measures might follow. The decision prompted speculation it might try to weaponise trade to influence the presidential election.

[China-Taiwan tensions surge as Beijing increases patrolling following fishermen's deaths](#)

19 February 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

Tensions are escalating in the waters near Taiwan as China intensifies patrols around a group of islands controlled by Taiwan. This move comes in the aftermath of the death of two Chinese fishermen who drowned during a pursuit by Taiwan's coast guard, accusing them of trespassing, CNN reported. China's coast guard, specifically its Fujian division, announced on Sunday that it would enhance maritime law enforcement and conduct regular patrols in the waters around Xiamen, China, and Taiwan's Kinmen islands.

Gan Yu, a spokesperson for China's coast guard, stated that the objective is to “further maintaining the order of operations in the relevant waters and protecting the lives and property of fishermen.” The decision to increase patrols raises concerns about heightened proximity between Chinese and Taiwanese coast guard vessels, potentially increasing the risk of miscalculation and conflict, as reported by CNN.



The recent escalation followed an incident where a Chinese speedboat capsized while attempting to evade Taiwan's coast guard, alleging trespassing for fishing in waters approximately 1 nautical mile off Kinmen's coast. Two crew members survived after being rescued by Taiwan's coast guard, while the other two were found unconscious and confirmed dead after being taken to the hospital in Kinmen.

China has strongly condemned the incident, blaming Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and accusing them of forcibly seizing mainland fishing boats and mistreating mainland fishermen. The Taiwan Affairs Office in China stated that the incident during the Lunar New Year holiday seriously hurt the feelings of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan authorities expressed regret over the deaths but maintained that their coast guard officers were acting within the bounds of the law. China's Taiwan Affairs Office further escalated the rhetoric, expressing "strong indignation" in mainland China and denying Taiwan's designation of "restricted" waters near Kinmen.

The office asserted that fishermen from both sides have been operating in traditional fishing grounds in the Xiamen-Kinmen waters since ancient times, rejecting the idea of "prohibited or restricted waters." It urged Taiwan authorities to release the surviving fishermen from custody.

In response, Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council reaffirmed its commitment to enforcing the law in the waters it controls, expelling or detaining trespassing vessels. It disputed Beijing's accusations of "rough expulsions," attributing the incident to constant intrusions by unidentified ships that lack certification or port registration. The council stated that the case is under investigation by Taiwanese prosecutors.

Kuan Bi-ling, Taiwan's Minister of Ocean Affairs Council, assured that the surviving fishermen under Taiwan's custody were being cared for and would be repatriated as the case

progressed. Kuan highlighted Taiwan's previous rescue efforts for mainland Chinese fishermen and cargo ships, emphasizing the humanitarian approach despite rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

Over the past three years, Taiwan's coast guard has reportedly rescued 20 individuals from mainland China. China has been applying economic, military, and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan and has severed most communications with Taipei since the Democratic Progressive Party came to power in 2016.

In previous years, during the more Beijing-friendly Kuomintang government's term, joint maritime drills were held for search and rescue operations, CNN reported.

[‘Cycling for a Free Tibet’ event launched ahead of Tibetan Uprising Day in Taiwan](#)

15 February 2024, [Phayul](#)

The Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan (HRNTT) organized a "Cycling for a Free Tibet" event in Taipei on Wednesday to raise public awareness on the Tibetan struggle for freedom ahead of the Tibetan Uprising Day. During the event, cyclists took to the streets of the capital to commemorate 65 years of Tibetan resistance against China's occupation of their homeland and the Lhasa uprising that happened on March 10, 1959.

Tashi Tsering, the founder of The Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan (HRNTT), held a press conference outside the Legislative Yuan. During the conference, he expressed his concerns over the Chinese Communist Party's coercion of Tibet into signing the "Seventeen Point Agreement" in 1951. He highlighted many issues happening in Tibet, including Tibetan children being separated from their parents and subjected to China's indoctrination education in colonial style boarding schools. He also highlighted that the Chinese Communist Party has imposed laws to dictate the selection of reincarnated Buddhist leaders, in a bid to regulate and suppress Tibetan Buddhism.

During the same event, DPP Legislator Puma Shen warned against China's economic and diplomatic aggression towards Taiwan. Shen cited the "peaceful treaty" signed with Tibet as a warning and emphasized Taiwan's obligation to defend against tyranny, especially in light of the circumstances in the so-called Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Hong Kong. Shen also pledged to continue advocating for freedom, democracy, and human rights within the parliament.

Sky Fung, the chief secretary of Hong Kong Outlanders, expressed his grief over the persecution of Tibet's religion, culture, and tradition after China's invasion. As a Hong Kong citizen, Fung expressed regret for not realizing China's deception earlier and for not raising support for Tibet. He emphasized the importance of freedom and cautioned against complacency, while warning Taiwan could potentially become China's next target.

More cycling events are scheduled in Taipei on Feb. 21, Feb. 28, and March 6, with another in Kaohsiung on March 2.

**Taiwan reports more Chinese balloons over Taiwan Strait**  
11 February 2024, [Reuters](#)

TAIPEI, Feb 11 (Reuters) - Taiwan's defence ministry said on Sunday it had detected eight Chinese balloons crossing the Taiwan Strait in the previous 24 hours, of which five flew across Taiwan, the second day in a row it has reported a large number of balloons.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory despite the strong objections of the government in Taipei, has complained since December about the balloons, saying they are a threat to aviation safety and attempt at psychological warfare.

In its daily report on Chinese military activities, Taiwan's defence ministry said it spotted the first balloon on Saturday morning and the last one mid-afternoon, having spotted the same number of balloons on Friday.

Five crossed the northern and central part of Taiwan, according to a map provided by the ministry.

China's defence ministry did not answer calls seeking comment on Sunday. Both China and Taiwan are currently celebrating the Lunar New Year holiday, the most important festival in the Chinese-speaking world.

Last month, China's government dismissed repeated complaints by Taiwan about the balloons, saying they are for meteorological purposes and should not be hyped up for political reasons.

Chinese warplanes operate daily in the Taiwan Strait and often cross its median line that previously served as an unofficial barrier between the two sides. China says it does not recognise the existence of that line.

Taiwan last month elected Vice President Lai Ching-te as its next president, a man China describes as a dangerous separatist.

Lai, who takes office in May, has offered talks with China, which have been rejected. He says only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

The potential for China to use balloons for spying became a global issue last February when the United States shot down what it said was a Chinese surveillance balloon. China said the balloon was a civilian craft that accidentally drifted astray.

## China-US Relations

**U.S. allegation of 'forced labor' in Xinjiang is huge lie:**  
Foreign Ministry  
28 February 2024, [ECNS](#)

The allegation of "forced labor" in Northwest China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is a huge lie, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday, urging the U.S. to immediately stop smearing China, stop intervening in China's internal affairs, and stop politicizing and weaponizing trade issues.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning made the remarks at a regular press briefing in Beijing, responding to media reports saying that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is intensifying scrutiny of supply chains of American solar companies as the Biden

administration mulls to tighten a ban on products assembled in Xinjiang.

The Chinese side has repeatedly pointed out that the allegation of "forced labor" in Xinjiang is a huge lie. The U.S. uses the so-called "forced labor" issue, which does not exist in Xinjiang, which often results in "forced unemployment" in Xinjiang, Mao said.

U.S.' move has severely undermined the basic human rights of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, violated international trade rules and disrupted international industrial and supply chains, the spokesperson said.

Mao said the U.S. must immediately stop smearing China, stop intervening in China's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights, and stop politicizing and weaponizing trade issues.

China disappointed over US veto on Israel-Hamas ceasefire vote

21 February 2024, [Deccan Herald](#)

China expressed "strong disappointment" over the United States blocking a draft United Nations Security Council resolution on the Israel-Hamas war calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, Xinhua said on Wednesday, citing its UN representative Zhang Jun.

The United States on Tuesday vetoed for the third time a draft United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution, blocking a demand for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire as it instead pushes the 15-member body towards a rival draft that calls for a temporary ceasefire linked to the release of hostages held by Hamas.

The US has said the draft resolution put forward by Algeria could jeopardize "sensitive negotiations" between US, Egypt, Israel and Qatar aimed at brokering a pause in fighting and securing the release of hostages.

"China expresses its strong disappointment at and dissatisfaction with the US veto," Xinhua said, citing Zhang who urged the UNSC to push for a ceasefire calling it a "moral obligation that the council cannot shy away from".

"The US veto sends a wrong message, pushing the situation in Gaza into a more dangerous one," said Zhang, adding that objection to ceasefire in Gaza is "nothing different from giving the green light to the continued slaughter".

Zhang said the spillover of the conflict is destabilising the Middle East region, raising risks of a wider war.

"Only by extinguishing the flames of war in Gaza can the world prevent the fires of hell from engulfing the entire region," Xinhua cited him as saying.

'Decoupling from China will only backfire on US itself,' Wang Yi holds 'frank' talk with Antony Blinken

18 February 2024, [LiveMint](#)

Washington should lift sanctions on Chinese companies and individuals, and that attempts to de-couple from China would only hurt the United States, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi told U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

The United States should lift the sanctions and not harm China's legitimate development rights, Wang told Blinken on Friday on the sidelines of a Munich security conference, according to a statement from China's foreign ministry.

Washington has imposed sanctions on various Chinese companies that it accuses of working with China's military despite denials from the firms. U.S. sanctions have also been imposed on individuals and entities over alleged human rights abuses in the Chinese region of Xinjiang. Sino-U.S. relations have shown signs of improvement in recent months as both sides took steps to re-establish channels of communication after ties between the two global superpowers sank to their lowest levels in decades.

But many points of friction remain.

The Biden administration has imposed bans on the sale of certain technologies to Chinese companies, citing national security risks. China has accused Washington of "weaponising" economic and trade issues.

"Making 'de-risking' into 'de-China', and building 'small yards and high walls' and seeking 'decoupling from China'" will only backfire on the U.S. itself, Wang told Blinken.

The exchanges between the two men were "frank, substantial and constructive", the ministry said in the statement released on Saturday.

Both sides exchanged views on regional issues including the Ukraine crisis and the Korean Peninsula, the statement said, without giving further details.

It added the Korean Peninsula envoys of both sides will "stay in touch".

Wang also reiterated that the United States should abide by the one-China principle, if it truly wanted stability in the Taiwan Strait.

"There is only one China in the world, and Taiwan is part of China's territory, and that is the real status quo in the Taiwan issue," Wang said.

China regards Taiwan as part of its territory. But Taiwan strongly objects to China's sovereignty claims and says only the island's people can decide their future.

U.S. President Joe Biden has said the United States does not support the independence of Taiwan. The United States does, however, maintain unofficial relations with the democratically governed island and remains its most important backer and arms supplier.

China and the U.S. have made some progress in bilateral relations since Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with Biden in November, where they reached agreements covering fentanyl, military communications and artificial intelligence on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit.

China and the U.S. held their first joint meeting of a working group on fentanyl precursor chemicals in Beijing in late January and China's financial officials hosted U.S. Treasury officials earlier this month.

Blinken and Wang discussed exchanges "at all levels" between the two countries in the next stage, and agreed to maintain dialogue in all areas, according to the Chinese foreign ministry statement.

Top diplomats from US, China hold 'constructive' talks on issues dividing them

16 February 2024, [Seattle Times](#)

Top diplomats from the U.S. and China on Friday held a "candid and constructive" discussion on issues vexing their strained relations over Taiwan, the situation in the South China Sea, Russia's war against Ukraine and synthetic opioids, the State Department said.

The meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference marked the latest and highest-level meeting between the two sides since U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks late last year in California.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Blinken emphasized the importance of maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait as well as expanding on nascent counternarcotics efforts. Blinken also raised concerns about China's support for Russia's defense industrial base that Washington sees as helping Moscow's military operations against Ukraine. "The two sides had a candid and constructive discussion on a range of bilateral, regional and global issues as part of ongoing efforts to maintain open lines of communication and responsibly manage competition in the relationship," Miller said.

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Wang called on the U.S. to remove sanctions against Chinese companies and individuals.

Wang emphasized that Washington's policy of "de-risking" economically from Beijing "has become 'de-Sinicizing,' 'building a tall fence' and 'de-coupling from China'" and "will come back to bite the U.S. itself," according to a Ministry readout Saturday morning.

He also called on the U.S. to stop searches of Chinese nationals. Recently, Chinese state media published reports of Chinese citizens being searched at the U.S. border.

In one prominent case, a group of students led by their professor, Xie Tao from Beijing Foreign

Studies University, were interrogated for three hours upon arriving at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, according to Xinhua. Xie is the dean of the School of International Relations and Diplomacy at the University.

Wang affirmed that cooperation to combat the spread of fentanyl was going "positively" and would continue, as well as the agreement to keep military-to-military communications. Both sides also discussed the ongoing Israel-Hamas war and the war in Ukraine.

Blinken "reiterated that the United States will stand up for our interests and values and those of our allies and partners," Miller said, adding that the current situations in the Middle East and with North Korea had also been topics of conversation.

"Both sides recognized the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between the United States and (China) across a range of strategic issues, including consultations and high-level meetings in key areas in the coming months," he said.

[Indonesia's presidential election has high stakes for US and China and their rivalry](#)

14 February 2024, [AP News](#)

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — When Indonesians cast their votes on Wednesday for a new president in one of the world's biggest elections, the stakes will also be high for the United States and China and their mounting rivalry in the region.

The Southeast Asian nation is a key battleground economically and politically in a region where the global powers have long been on a collision course over Taiwan, human rights, U.S. military deployments and Beijing's aggressive actions in disputed waters, including the South China Sea.

Outgoing President Joko Widodo's foreign policy has avoided criticizing either Beijing or Washington, but also rejected alignment with either power. The delicate balancing act has paved the way for substantial Chinese trade and investment for Indonesia, including a \$7.3 billion high-speed railway that was largely

funded by China, while Jakarta has also boosted defense ties and intensified military exercises with the U.S.

These policies would likely continue if the election is won by the apparent front-runner Prabowo Subianto, the current defense minister whose vice presidential running mate is Widodo's eldest son, according to analysts.

"The problem for great powers, however, is that Jakarta is assiduously non-aligned and almost certainly will remain as such regardless of who wins," said Derek Grossman, a senior defense analyst at Rand Corp., a U.S.-based think tank.

[IRFBA Chair's Statement on Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan religious prisoners of conscience the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, writer Go Sherab Gyatso, and separation of Tibetan children from their heritage and language](#)

09 February 2024, [U.S. Department of State](#)

*IRFBA Chair's Statement on Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan religious prisoners of conscience the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, writer Go Sherab Gyatso, and separation of Tibetan children from their heritage and language*

As the Chair of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance, I appreciate the contribution of Tibetan Buddhism to a deep understanding of seemingly self-evident concepts such as love, compassion and meditation. Tibetan Buddhism has played an important role in the history of the region and continues to have a transformative power in Tibetan society, as well as a positive influence on neighbouring countries and many individuals around the globe.

I express my grave concern for the ongoing enforced disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, whose whereabouts and well-being in the People's Republic of China (PRC) have been unknown for nearly 30 years.

PRC authorities abducted Gedhun Choekyi Nyima in 1995 when he was six years old and just days after His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized him as the 11th Panchen Lama. In



response, the PRC installed its own Panchen Lama and continues attempts to compel Tibetan Buddhists to pledge allegiance to the government-selected individual.

I am concerned that PRC authorities have denied Gedhun Choekyi Nyima a lifetime of being able to freely practice his faith in a manner of his choosing. Further, I find the lack of independent access to his whereabouts, the seeming restrictions on his freedom of movement, and the limited information about him spanning nearly three decades highly troubling.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is one among many Tibetans whom PRC authorities have silenced or oppressed for expressions of their beliefs, culture, language, and traditions. This includes detaining Tibetans for possessing images of the Dalai Lama, such as Go Sherab Gyatso, a Tibetan Buddhist monk, writer, educator and public intellectual currently sentenced to 10 years in prison for his peaceful advocacy and whom authorities previously detained for reportedly possessing and displaying a portrait of the Dalai Lama.

The PRC's cultural erasure throughout Tibet, including efforts to "Sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism and interfere in the selection process of Tibetan Buddhist lamas, including the Dalai Lama, are alarmingly widespread. These policies prohibit Tibetans from offering prayers to the Dalai Lama in public, as well as images of the Dalai Lama himself. Authorities have also banned the display of highly symbolic Tibetan prayer flags and the celebration of many important Tibetan festivals.

As such, many monasteries and religious events have become subject to regular surveillance. According to monitors, of the roughly 6,000 monasteries that once existed in Tibet, only 13 have been left undamaged. For instance, the 2016 destruction of Larung Gar, the largest Buddhist academy in the world, resulted in the forced eviction of thousands of students, monks, and nuns living around it. Many were reportedly subjected to brutality and "political re-education."

Last year, several UN experts expressed concern about credible reports that PRC authorities have coerced approximately one million Tibetan children in what they characterized as a "mandatory large-scale program intended to assimilate Tibetans into majority Han culture, contrary to international human rights standards." Separating a generation of Tibetan children from their heritage and language will do untold damage to their ability to shape and preserve their identity.

I urge the PRC to cease all human rights abuses against Tibetans, including by accounting for the whereabouts and well-being of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima; ending the coercion of Tibetan children into government-run boarding schools; upholding freedom of religion or belief for all; and abandoning policies and practices aimed at erasing Tibet's rich religious, cultural, and linguistic identity.

Chinese hackers have lurked in some US infrastructure systems for 'at least five years'  
07 February 2024, [CNN](#)

The Chinese hackers behind a campaign to infiltrate transportation hubs and other critical American infrastructure have had access to some of their targets' computer networks for "at least five years," according to a new report by US and allied security agencies obtained by CNN.

The campaign is part of a long-running effort by the hackers to position themselves for potentially crippling cyberattacks that could disrupt water and electricity, according to US officials.

US intelligence chiefs sounded the alarm about the threat to Congress last week, saying Beijing could use the hackers to disrupt a US response if China invades Taiwan. FBI Director Christopher Wray told lawmakers last week that the hackers could "wreak havoc and cause real-world harm" to the US.

The nearly 50-page report comes as US-China tensions over Taiwan and other key issues remain high and shows how central cyber

operations could be to Chinese efforts to hobble US infrastructure in the event of a conflict between the two superpowers, according to US officials. The report would be the most detailed disclosure yet by the US government of the hackers' stealthy techniques, one aimed at helping private owners of critical infrastructure spot the Chinese hackers in their networks.

The hackers' presence in critical US networks has sparked a monthslong effort by US national security officials to kick the hackers out.

The report, which US officials are set to release this week, makes clear that the Chinese hackers' activity began much earlier than previously known, with the hackers scoping and accessing IT systems years ago. From there, they have spent months looking for ways to maneuver onto more sensitive industrial systems that help control power flow and water.

The Beijing-backed hackers have been probing systems that control heating, cooling and water, access that, if exploited, could allow them to manipulate those systems and cause "significant infrastructure failures," the report says. The hackers have also broken into security cameras at unnamed critical facilities, according to the document.

There are no signs yet that China has decided to use the hackers' presence to disrupt US infrastructure, according to US officials, but they are concerned that could change quickly in the event of a crisis.

Liu Pengyu, a spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, denied the US hacking allegations in a statement to CNN on Wednesday and accused Washington of conducting its own cyberattacks.

The new report also sheds new light on the sprawling nature of the hacking operation and on concerns from US allies over the activity.

US officials have confirmed the hackers have broken into computer networks at energy, transportation and water facilities in the "continental and non-continental" US and its overseas territories, including Guam, according to the report. In one case, after breaching the

IT systems at an unnamed water facility, the hackers had access to a range of critical information on water treatment plants and water wells, according to the analysis.

The FBI, National Security Agency and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency are among the US agencies that produced the report, along with cybersecurity agencies from Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. CNN obtained a non-public version of the report, and sources familiar with the report told CNN the agencies are preparing to publish a version of it this week.

Canada's cybersecurity agency "assesses that the direct threat to Canada's critical infrastructure" from the Chinese hackers "is likely lower" than that to US infrastructure, but that Canada would still likely still be affected by a disruption to US infrastructure due to "cross-border integration," the document says. Australia and New Zealand, two key allies in the US quest to counter China in the Pacific, could be vulnerable to similar activity from Chinese government hackers, the report says.

## State of Ecology of the Tibetan Plateau

*Breakthrough in Qinghai: Cloning of Tibetan Goats Promises a Sustainable Future for Local Breeding*  
26 February 2024, [BNN](#)

*Chinese scientists have achieved a significant breakthrough in animal conservation by successfully cloning Tibetan goats, offering hope for the future of the Tibetan goat breeding industry and local communities on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau.*

The dawn of a new era in animal husbandry has broken over the windswept expanses of Qinghai Province, where Chinese scientists have achieved a **significant breakthrough** in the field of cloning. The successful birth of two live **Tibetan goats**, using the body cells of adult goats, marks a pivotal moment in the efforts to preserve this breed, known for its crucial role

in the livelihoods of local communities on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau.

### **A Leap Toward Sustainable Breeding**

The cloning program, spearheaded by a dedicated team from **Northwest A&F University**, has not only demonstrated the viability of cloning as a tool for animal conservation but also raised hopes for the future of the **Tibetan goat breeding industry**. Utilizing cells from three rams and one ewe, the scientists were able to produce clones that were born healthy, with the first weighing in at 3.4 kg. This achievement is seen as a cornerstone in maintaining the breed's adaptability to the challenging plateau environment, a trait that is of paramount importance for the survival and prosperity of local farming communities.

### **Revitalizing Local Economies**

The Tibetan goat is not just any livestock; it is a vital source of income for farmers and herdsman in the region, contributing significantly to the local economy through the production of cashmere and other products. The success of this cloning initiative is part of broader efforts that began in 2018, aimed at improving the breeding of Tibetan yaks and goats. By promoting superior goat varieties, the program seeks to support the income of local communities, enhancing both the quality and efficiency of the breeding industry in the region.

### **Looking to the Future**

While the cloning of Tibetan goats represents a leap forward in science and animal conservation, it also opens up a dialogue on the ethical considerations and potential challenges that accompany such advancements. The success of these efforts hinges not only on the scientific community's ability to replicate desirable genetic traits but also on its capacity to address concerns related to biodiversity and the welfare of cloned animals. Nevertheless, as the program continues to evolve, it offers a beacon of hope for the sustainable development of livestock breeding on the Qinghai-Xizang Plateau,

promising a brighter future for the local communities that depend on it.

### **Shifting Skies Over the Tibetan Plateau: A Future of Increased Precipitation**

22 February 2024, [BNN](#)

*Delve into the study revealing the projected increase in precipitation over the Tibetan Plateau amidst climate change uncertainties. Explore the global implications, challenges, and key findings shaping our understanding of climate dynamics.*

Imagine standing on the vast, sprawling expanse of the Tibetan Plateau, the roof of the world, where the earth meets the sky at an average elevation of 4,000 meters. Here, in this region often referred to as the 'Asian Water Tower,' the future of millions of people and countless ecosystems hangs in the balance, swayed by the whims of precipitation patterns. A recent study led by Prof. ZHOU Tianjun from the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences delves deep into these patterns, offering a glimpse into a future shaped by climate change.

### **The Heart of the Matter: Precipitation Projections**

The study, published in *Geophysical Research Letters*, employs an innovative approach to tackle the longstanding question of how precipitation over the Tibetan Plateau will evolve in the face of global warming. Utilizing an inter-model empirical orthogonal function analysis under a high greenhouse gas emission scenario, the findings point towards a consistent increase in precipitation, particularly along the southern edge of the Plateau, throughout the 21st century. This revelation is significant, considering the critical role this region plays in the water cycle of surrounding areas.

However, the road to these findings was not straightforward. The research illuminated the substantial variability among models, underscoring the influence of model uncertainty. The increase in precipitation is predominantly attributed to enhanced vertical

thermodynamic responses, with the vertical dynamical components playing a lesser role. This distinction is crucial for understanding the mechanics behind the projected changes and refining future models.

#### **Wider Implications: Beyond the Plateau**

The study's implications ripple far beyond the Tibetan Plateau, highlighting the intricate connections within our global climate system. One key factor **influencing the region's precipitation patterns** is the warming of the equatorial Pacific, which affects moisture transport to the TP. This underscores the global nature of climate impacts, where changes in one part of the world can significantly affect distant regions.

Moreover, the research sheds light on the importance of recognizing the diversity in climate model projections. These projections are influenced by variables such as climate sensitivity and the response of equatorial Pacific sea surface temperatures to global warming. The call for further investigation into the variability of these responses under different greenhouse gas emission scenarios is a reminder of the complexities involved in predicting our climate future.

#### **Looking Ahead: The Path Forward**

The Tibetan Plateau's future, as outlined by Prof. ZHOU and his team, is one of increased precipitation. Yet, this future is mired in uncertainties and complexities, reflecting the broader challenges of climate modeling and prediction. The study not only contributes valuable insights into the specific changes expected over the TP but also highlights the critical need for enhanced understanding and refinement of climate models.

As the world grapples with the realities of climate change, the findings from the Tibetan Plateau serve as a microcosm of the larger challenges at play. The balance between the thermodynamic and dynamical components of our climate, the global interconnectedness of climate impacts, and the inherent uncertainties in our projections are themes that resonate across regions and scales. The journey towards a deeper understanding of our

changing climate continues, with each study like Prof. ZHOU's adding a piece to the puzzle.

**Decoding Summer Rainfall Variations on Tibetan Plateau**  
22 February 2024, [The Mirage](#)

The Tibetan Plateau (TP), a complex high-altitude region with an average elevation of 4,000 meters, is widely recognized as the "Asian Water Tower" and "the third pole." Changes in precipitation over the TP significantly affect the water cycle in the surrounding areas, directly and indirectly affecting the lives of millions of people and ecosystems. Despite extensive efforts to project future precipitation changes over the TP due to global warming, there remains a considerable range in the magnitude of existing projections. The underlying physics causing this inter-model spread in precipitation projections over the TP remains unclear. Therefore, gaining insight into the precipitation response to global warming and identifying sources of uncertainty are critical to improving the reliability of these projections.

In a study published in *Geophysical Research Letters* on Feb. 1, researchers highlighted the persistent increase in precipitation throughout the 21st century, with the most significant changes occurring along the southern edge of the TP. However, they found substantial inter-model variability in precipitation projections, emphasizing that model uncertainty dominates the overall uncertainty in the medium and long term.

Led by Prof. ZHOU Tianjun from the Institute of Atmospheric Physics (IAP) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the researchers used an inter-model empirical orthogonal function analysis of projected precipitation changes under a very high greenhouse gas (GHG) emission scenario, referred to as "SSP5-8.5" in climate modeling.

The analysis showed that the leading principal component explains over 40%, and even 80%, of the total variance at regional scales. Moisture budget analysis indicated that the increase in precipitation is primarily driven by

enhanced vertical thermodynamic (TH) responses to the increased water-holding capacity of the atmosphere, with a weak effect from the vertical dynamical (DY) term. However, both vertical DY and TH components contribute to the leading mode of inter-model spread in precipitation projections.

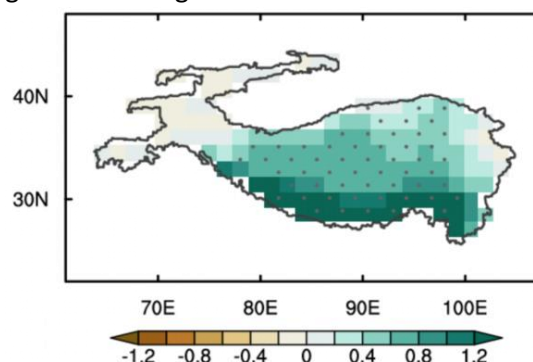
"The vertical TH component is significantly related to the climate sensitivity among the models involved in the phase-6 of the Coupled Model Intercomparison Project, suggesting that models projecting a warmer climate also tend to project a stronger TH term," said QIU Hui, first author of the study and a Ph.D. student from the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The researchers further revealed that the inter-model spread of the dynamic component is influenced by the equatorial Pacific warming pattern through the Walker Circulation change, which controls diabatic heating over the Marine continent and leads to atmospheric circulation changes that affect northward moisture transport to the southern TPs.

"Both the model weighting technique and the selection of high skill models with better performance of historical climate simulation have been traditionally used to increase the robustness of climate projection in previous studies," said Prof. ZHOU Tianjun, corresponding author of the study, "Our results enrich the research by highlighting that the diversity in CMIP6 models projecting precipitation changes over the TP is not only related to local model performance, but is influenced by the overall performance of climate models in the context of climate sensitivity and the response of equatorial Pacific sea surface temperature to global warming."

The researchers also examined the relationship between the thermodynamic term and climate sensitivity under scenarios with low (termed as "SSP1-2.6") and intermediate (termed as "SSP2-4.5") GHG emissions, and found similar results to scenarios with very high GHG emissions. They call for further research into the inter-model variability of the response of

equatorial Pacific Sea Surface Temperature to global warming.



The spatial distribution of summer precipitation anomalies (units: mm day<sup>-1</sup>) in 2050-2099 over Tibetan Plateau under the SSP5-8.5 scenario. The dots denote regions where at least 80% of the models agree on the sign of change. The black line indicates the boundaries of the TP, where the elevations are above 2,500 m. The baseline climatology refers to the period from 1965-2014, and the mid- and long-term is from 2050-2099. (Image by IAP).

[Lakes in Himalayan Plateau gradually transitioning to carbon sinks from sources: Study](#)

04 February 2024, Times of India

NEW DELHI: Yearly carbon emissions from lakes in the Qingzang Plateau (QZP) or the Tibetan Plateau have declined with some lakes shifting from being carbon sources during 1970-2000 to becoming carbon sinks in the next two decades, new research has found. Researchers said the trend of decreasing carbon emissions in QZP lakes over the past five decades suggested that these lakes could assume an increasingly significant role in both regional and global carbon cycles in the context of ongoing global climate change.

The Qingzang Plateau, known as the Himalayan Plateau in India, is a vast elevated plateau located at the intersection of Central, South and East Asia and includes the Indian regions of Ladakh and Lahaul and Spiti. While carbon sources release more carbon into the atmosphere than they absorb, carbon sinks absorb more carbon from the atmosphere than they release.



The researchers, including those from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, China, said their study offers insights into the timing and degree of shifting in the yearly carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) exchange flux for lakes in the QZP region. Their findings are published in the journal *Environmental Science and Ecotechnology*. The team found that between 1970 and 2000, the lake systems in the QZP had generally acted as carbon sources. However, from 2000 to 2020, some freshwater and saltwater lakes shifted from acting as carbon sources to small carbon sinks, with decreasing yearly CO<sub>2</sub> exchange flux.

They also found that before 2000, the average temperature on the QZP from 1970 to 2000 was lower, aquatic plant and phytoplankton rates were relatively low, and the effect of respiration on carbon emissions was more pronounced.

After 2000, however, the average temperature on the QZP was seen to show a rising trend. Further, the researchers found that the CO<sub>2</sub> absorbed through photosynthesis exceeded the CO<sub>2</sub> released through respiration, along with a reduction in the partial pressure of CO<sub>2</sub> (pCO<sub>2</sub>) at the water-air interface and water bodies became increasingly less saturated. All of these conditions were conducive for CO<sub>2</sub> entering water bodies, they said. They found that in recent decades, the yearly solar radiation on the QZP has generally declined. This will weaken the circulation of warm and cold water in the water bodies, known to cause a significant outflow of CO<sub>2</sub>, and therefore reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, they said. Phytoplankton and aquatic macrophytes, too, are sensitive to light and a slight reduction will slow respiration processes and gradually decrease CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, they said.

## Military and Infrastructure Development

China moved military forces in disregard of agreements: Jaishankar on border row in eastern Ladakh  
26 February 2024, [Tribune India](#)

India and China are rising and the two countries, in the process, are changing the world order, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday.

Jaishankar, citing talks between leadership of the two countries in Mamallapuram and Wuhan, said India tried to maintain an “equilibrium” in the ties through diplomacy, but the relations took a different turn following China’s military build-up along the Line of Actual Control in 2020 in violation of laid down norms.

The external affairs minister, speaking at a media summit organised by the TV9 Network, described the rise of India and China as “significant” in the global geopolitical scenario. “If you were to list three or four really big things which have changed in the last 20-25 years, I think most people would agree it would be the rise of China and the rise of India,” he said, replying to a question.

“You can say China started it much earlier because our own politics here delayed the era of reform. That’s okay. What’s done is done. But there is no question, both countries are rising and for world politics, this poses a very interesting problem,” he said.

“The problem is this: both are changing the world order by their rise. So each one has an impact vis-a-vis the world. But they also happened to be neighbours. So their relationship is also changing while it is changing vis-a-vis the rest of the world,” Jaishankar added.

The external affairs minister argued that the situation, therefore, is making it “very complicated to create an equilibrium”. They

were part of “equilibrium maintenance exercise”, Jaishankar said when specifically asked about the informal summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Chinese city of Wuhan in 2018 and Mamallapuram in 2019.

“We tried to maintain that equilibrium naturally—first through diplomacy. So what you saw in Wuhan and Mamallapuram, etc was that equilibrium maintenance exercise,” he said.

“But what happened in 2020 was, China for whatever reason chose to move military forces in disregard of agreements. That called for a different response for the equilibrium,” he said.

“The logical thing for us to do, which is what we did, was we moved our forces and in a very big way. So from 2020, you have an equilibrium, one part of which is the military posture in the border areas, one part of it today obviously is the political relationship impacted by this border situation,” he said.

“One part of it is also the economic measures that we have taken,” he added.

Jaishankar said the Modi government believes that interests of the country’s working class, small enterprises and small industries must be protected against “unfair competition”.

“Our effort today is to build our deep strengths. We have to build our digital capabilities, our telecom, our manufacturing, our pharma industry, our health self-sufficiency, our defence industry, our ability to deploy on the border which you can only do if you build infrastructure,” he said.

Jaishankar suggested that India’s annual average expenditure on the border with China was about Rs 3,500 crore till 2014.

Today, it is almost Rs 15,000 crore, he said.

There was a neglect of the border infrastructure, he said, adding “you cannot defend the border if you do not build infrastructure there”.

Military diplomacy in focus amid mega peacekeeping exercise

26 February 2024, [The Nation](#)

With powerful nations sending high-level defence delegations to Kathmandu, Nepal’s military diplomacy is in full swing.

Nepal Army is hosting the fourth edition of Exercise Shanti Prayas, which brings more than 1,100 military personnel from 17 nations. Admiral John Aquilino, who leads the United States Indo-Pacific Command, arrived in Kathmandu via New Delhi on Saturday to observe the exercise sponsored by the Nepali and US armies.

Shanti Prayas is a multinational peacekeeping exercise hosted rotationally by the Nepal Army and the US Indo-Pacific Command.

Observers say having good military-to-military relations contributes to the improvement of overall bilateral and multilateral relations between Nepal and respective countries.

Adm Aquilino is scheduled to visit the Birendra Peace Operations Training Centre (BPOTC) in Panchkhal on Sunday, said Nepal Army spokesperson Brigadier General Krishna Prasad Bhandari. He is also scheduled to meet President Ramchandra Paudel, Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Purna Bahadur Khadka, Chief of the Army Staff General Prabhu Ram Sharma and senior government and military officials, on Monday, according to the sources.

In New Delhi, Aquilino addressed the Raisina Dialogue and held talks with the External Affairs Minister of India S Jaishankar, among other Indian officials. Jaishankar wrote about his meeting with the admiral on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter). The minister said that he had a good conversation with Aquilino on strategic affairs.

Prime Minister Dahal inaugurated the Exercise Shanti Prayas-IV on February 20. The event will continue till March 4. Rachel Schiller, the US deputy assistant secretary for programs and operations under the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, attended during the opening ceremony.

Shanti Prayas—IV is designed to improve peacekeeping capabilities, strengthen military-to-military cooperation, and enhance the core

peacekeeping competencies of all participants by the UN doctrines. The militaries of Nepal, the

US, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Fiji, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uruguay, and Vietnam are participating in the effort, according to the Nepal Army.

After the Shanti Prayas concludes, a high-level delegation led by a lieutenant general of the Chinese People's Liberation Army is due to arrive in Kathmandu. The agenda of the March visit is yet to be fixed, according to sources at the Ministry of Defence.

There are some pending issues with China like military procurement, installation of an ammunition plant for the Nepal Army, another joint military exercise, training for Nepali Army officials, and military-to-military cooperation, sources privy to the developments said.

"The Chinese side has informed us that the PLA delegation will be led by a lieutenant general. The two sides are finalising agendas and issues," said a defence official informed on the matter.

Chinese Major General Yue Ande of the Tibet Military Command of the PLA visited Kathmandu in August last year. In talks held with Gen Sharma, the two sides discussed holding the pending joint military drills, among other issues.

When Nepal Army chief Sharma visited China in October-November last year to attend the Beijing-Xiangshan Forum, he held talks with Chief of Staff Gen Liu Zhenli of the Central Military Commission (CMC) of the Chinese Army and visited Chinese Army's different units and training centres in Xi'an, Shanghai and Guangzhou.

However, Nepal Army spokesperson Brig Gen Bhandari said that he has no information about the PLA delegation's Nepal visit.

Moreover, several Indian Army officials and delegations have also visited Kathmandu and held talks with General Sharma and other senior military and government officials.

In the context of the Indo-Pacific, Shanti Prayas is a remarkable event at a time when regional bodies like SAARC have stalled, said retired Maj Gen Purna Silwal. The participation of India and other democratic countries in this particular multilateral military exercise is significant.

"In terms of participation, the event this year is the biggest of its kind in Nepal. As the army is the country's only stable institution, all major and middle powers want to have good relations with it," said Silwal. "If the relations between the armies are good, other relations will automatically improve. This will further stabilise and cement bilateral ties."

Nepal Army is capable of handling geopolitical rivalry, and such military exercises and arrivals of individual military delegations from various countries are not targeted against any nation, Silwal added.

After Nepal became the highest troops contributing country to UN peacekeeping, this is another milestone for us, said Silwal. "This achievement will boost our confidence."

#### CCP Expands Military Recruitment, Especially in Rural Areas

13 February 2024, [ChinaScope](#)

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is expanding its military recruitment, particularly in rural areas.

Recently-leaked CCP recruitment documents state that the CCP's recruiting focus should be on college students, while also recruiting widely in the countryside, "leaving no dead zones" (no unrecruited rural areas). For those Chinese citizens who leave their city of residence to travel for work or school, it is mandatory that they register with the military regarding their travel plans. Expert observers believe this expanded recruitment activity is preparation for large-scale war.

The CCP is focused on recruiting college graduates, who are suitable for adaptation to modern information warfare. Rural recruits are also targeted to provide a large pool of soldiers whose casualties may have less immediate economic and political impact. There are

reports that the CCP has been recruiting discharged soldiers back into service only 5 years after they leave the military, as well as relaxing requirements to allow military service by people with criminal records.

New military recruitment regulations enacted in May 2022 have enabled this expansion. The new regulations include allowing retired soldiers to re-enlist, as well as directives to recruit students with high-tech skills. The CCP has completed a nationwide military service registration covering the country's entire population, signaling preparation for war.

According to expert Yuan Hongbing, a Chinese legal expert living in exile in Australia, the CCP under Xi Jinping is waiting to see what will happen in the 2024 US presidential election. The CCP believes that, regardless of who wins, the result will divide America for years, creating a window of opportunity for the CCP to attack Taiwan. Yuan says China's war preparations are likely focused on seizing this window of time in 2025-2027. Expanded recruitment from rural areas in particular will provide "cannon fodder" for large-scale combat operations against Taiwan planned for this period.

DEFENSE/9 Chinese military aircraft cross median line: Taiwan defense ministry

14 February 2024, [Focus Taiwan](#)

Taipei, Feb. 14 (CNA) A total of 14 warplanes and drones sent by the Chinese People's Liberation Army were detected in waters near Taiwan on Wednesday afternoon, with nine of them crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait, according to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense (MND).

The 14 aircraft dispatched by the Chinese military starting at 1 p.m. included Shenyang J-16 fighter jets, Shaanxi Y-8 transport aircraft, and unmanned aerial vehicles, the MND said. Among them, nine crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait and entered Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) off the north and southwest of the country in tandem with patrolling activities carried out by Chinese military vessels in the areas, the MND said.

The MND said that it had monitored the situation closely and "employed appropriate forces," such as scrambling fighter jets, dispatching military vessels, and readying coastal missile systems.

The median line of the Taiwan Strait served for decades as a tacit border, but the Chinese military has more flagrantly sent aircraft, warships, and drones across it since former United States House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in early August 2022.

Since the beginning of 2024, Beijing has also begun sending balloons over Taiwan, according to the MND.

An ADIZ is a self-declared area in which a country claims the right to identify, locate, and control approaching foreign aircraft but is not part of its territorial airspace as defined by international law.

China 'Targets' India In Its Latest Military Venture; Works On '007 Drones' To Fight Indian Army At LAC  
05 February 2024, [The Eurasian Times](#)

**Special Agent 007, aka James Bond of the British intelligence agency MI-6, is the most renowned special agent in the world. The agent carries out the most complex and life-threatening missions with finesse and has a knack for surviving against all odds.**

Real life, however, is not that predictable.

Keeping this in mind, the Chinese military and scientists have started the task of developing drones that can replace special agents in the coming decade to carry out high-risk military operations overseas without risking human life.

A unit of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been working in the bustling city of Chengdu in southwest China along with a team of scientists to develop these complex drones to execute operations in foreign countries.

China's stated position is that it does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, and its military's overseas operations have always been cloaked in secrecy.

However, with human operators come the risk of being captured by adversaries and wreaking havoc with the military plans. The research to replace human agents in special operations using technology is indicative of how the Chinese approach to espionage will pan out in the future.

In a recent paper published in the Fire Control & Command Control journal, the PLA's 78092 unit discusses a fictitious special operation overseas. The theoretical plan intends to serve as a guideline for Chinese companies and researchers working on drone technology.

As reported by the South China Morning Post, the operation is set in 2035 when a small-scale conflict erupts between China and one of its neighbors, with whom it shares a border.

Without naming the country, the paper mentions that a river with an average depth of 30 meters runs along its border. Incidentally, the River Brahmaputra (known as Yarlung Tsangpo in China) flows from Tibet to India.

In the case study, both countries decided to stick to using small arms, small boats, drones, and anti-aircraft guns to avoid escalation. In this scenario, the UAV would be required to traverse long distances, dive deep underwater, and remain submerged for long periods, awaiting the opportune moment. When required, it will re-emerge from the water to throw a punch before going beneath the water surface again.

The Chinese military's special mission entailed targeting the enemy's critical command and logistics hub that lies along a river, some 40 kilometers inside from the border.

The Chinese armed forces, for this mission, require a drone that can operate both alone and in swarms; it should be able to fly as well as navigate river depths to avoid detection by the adversary and should be able to maneuver to avoid obstacles both in the air and in the water.

The PLA wants to give more teeth to the drones by making them able to operate with precision and beyond visual range without human intervention. They should be able to hover over the battlefield to assess the damage and take

further action if required. It should be able to pursue fleeing enemy combatants and return to Chinese territory by annihilating the enemy in totality.

### **China Leads Drone Innovation**

China has long ensconced itself at the forefront of drone innovation. More than 80 percent of commercial drones in the world are made by Chinese companies. Shenzhen-based DJI commands 70 percent of the world's consumer drone market alone.

Now, China is carefully factoring unmanned systems into its military planning. A 2019 China defense white paper stated that "there is a prevailing trend to develop long-range precision, intelligent, stealthy or unmanned weaponry or equipment" and added that "intelligent warfare is on the horizon."

Since then, Beijing has been able to develop strike-capable and non-weaponized systems for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions. In the 2000s, a drone was synonymous with American MQ-9s, but a 2018 Department of Defense report concludes that China "is closing the gap with the US Air Force across a spectrum of capabilities, gradually eroding longstanding US technical advantages."

Its Wing Loong and Caihong (CH) series have helped China's military exports, particularly to the Middle East and North Africa. Its fleet of reconnaissance drones includes the High-Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) Soaring Dragon and Cloud Shadow.

While the Chinese military has not demonstrated drone strikes, it has deployed UAVs in non-combat scenarios. But its ambition is fast changing.

CH-5 is almost identical to Reaper. It is larger than the Reaper, but its payload capacity is roughly 1200 kg, which is 500 kg less than that of the Reaper. Like other Chinese aerial platforms, CH-5 is limited by its engine. But it boasts an operational endurance of 60 hours, which is more than double the Reaper's fly time of 27 hours.



The development of the latest version in the series CH-7 stealth drone is expected to finish this year.

In 2023, Chinese researchers developed a new method of enabling UAVs to maneuver, acquire, and potentially attack targets in global-positioning-system (GPS) “denied” environments. The drone proposes to use “image-based visual servoing” (IBVS) to “lock on” to hostile assets. This method, the researchers suggest, can be used to acquire targets, even quickly moving ones.

This technology is likely to find application in military drones. Till now, human operators have been required to give the “kill command.” But increased use of Artificial Intelligence and drone autonomy, like the ability to work in GPS-denied areas, means humans will soon be taken out of the chain of command.

## Sino-Indian Relations

'Mind games ...': Jaishankar warns against China's bid to derail bilateral ties

23 February 2024, [Times of India](#)

NEW DELHI: India and China face significant challenges in maintaining a balanced relationship, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said on Friday. Speaking at the Raisina Dialogue, Jaishankar noted that China's immediate issue was departure from established norms, leading to the border dispute in eastern Ladakh. During his address, Jaishankar cautioned against China's "mind games" and attempts to limit discussions to bilateral matters, emphasizing that India should assert its rights and consider other global factors to achieve a favourable equilibrium.

On the economic front, Jaishankar referred to Goldman Sachs' projections that by 2075, both India and China could become \$50 trillion plus economies.

The minister was responding to a question on whether the two countries would manage to

find an equilibrium or a balance in their frosty relations.

"Here is the immediate issue which is: From the late 1980s, we had an understanding on the border precisely because it suited both of us. Now there was a departure after almost 30 years. A departure on their side in terms of how they behaved on the border. And there was a pushback from our side," he said.

"I think arriving at an equilibrium, then maintaining those and refreshing those is going to be one of the biggest challenges for both countries. It is not going to be easy," he noted.

The external affairs minister said "mind games" will be played which would be that it is "just between the two of us".

"The other 190 odd countries do not exist in our relationship. That will be the mind game which will be played. I do not think we should play it," he said.

In terms of the two economies, Jaishankar acknowledged that China had a head start and a more intensive and robust growth trajectory. However, he emphasized that economic growth patterns suggest that both countries will eventually flatten out, with India's growth surpassing China's.

"I am not in denial of what the numbers today suggest. But if one looks for an example in Goldman Sachs predictions which is that we will both really by around 2075 end up as \$50 trillion plus economies and will be the two closest to each other," he said.

'Ladakh stand-off led India to cite China as No. 1 threat'

13 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

(TibetanReview.net, Feb13'24) – India may still be flummoxed by the audacity of the Chinese army intrusion into eastern Ladakh in mid-2020, especially as regards the level of authority at which the decision was taken, but it has enabled the country to be more aware of and outspoken about where its actual threat lies, *theprint.in* Feb 11 cited former Army chief Gen Manoj Naravane as saying.

Four years since the Chinese intrusion, which led to a continued standoff but subsequent

pullback to their side, the question why they did it still confounds the Indian defence and security establishment, the report said.

While noting that only time will tell at which level the decision was taken to stir tensions with India at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Naravane has said it worked out well for India because it was now more aware of where the actual threat is.

“Why they did what they did is a question which continues to confound us. Especially because they did it when the world was in the claws of the Covid pandemic,” Gen Naravane has said Feb 10, speaking at the WordsCount literature festival held at the Mayo College in Ajmer, Rajasthan.

Given the nature of the Chinese system, it is very unlikely that the decision to do what they did was taken at a local level, that is, by some miscalculation by the Battalion Commander, the report cited him as saying.

“Had to be something which had to be coordinated much higher up. Whether that much higher up is at the level of their Western Theatre Command or right up to the Politburo (of the Chinese Communist Party), that time will tell,” he has said.

Speaking at the annual event hosted by author and scriptwriter Advaita Kala, he has added, “But what has happened is not a bad thing. Because for a very long time, we were shying away from calling out China as the No. 1 threat”.

And he has continued: “We were always hoping that by being decent and conciliatory and agreeing to what they are saying, they would return that favour in full measure and also give us the respect that is due. So obviously that was not coming... as a result of activities of 2020, we are more focused now on where the threat actually lies.”

'Beijing tried to...': Amit Shah likens LAC standoff to 1962 Indo-China war in Lok Sabha  
10 February 2024, [Live Mint](#)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday spoke on the India-China border dispute along

the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh and said that Beijing was attempting a repeat of the 1962 war with India. While speaking in Parliament, Amit Shah reiterated the Union Government's stand that India has “not lost out on any territory” in the military standoff against the Chinese troops.

“China tried to do what it did in 1962,” news agency PTI quoted **Amit Shah** as saying in Lok Sabha. “Our leadership displayed resolve and not an inch of India's land was lost,” he added. Congress-led Opposition parties have attacked the PM Modi-led Union government on the issue and claimed that **Chinese troops** have encroached on India's territory.

**Prime Minister Narendra Modi** met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg and discussed the de-escalation of tensions along the LAC. “In a conversation with President Xi Jinping of China, PM highlighted India's concerns on the unresolved issues along the LAC in the western sector of the India-China border areas,” India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra said.

After the meeting, China also released a statement emphasizing the need to properly handling the border issues. “President Xi stressed that improving **China-India relations** serves the common interests of the two countries and peoples, and is also conducive to peace, stability, and development of the world and the region,” the statement said.

“The two sides should bear in mind the overall interests of their bilateral relations and handle properly the border issue so as to jointly safeguard peace and tranquility in the border region,” it added.

#### **India-China LAC standoff**

The tense standoff between Indian and Chinese troops commenced in the latter part of April-May 2020. The confrontation culminated in a violent clash in the **Galwan Valley** on the night of June 15, resulting in casualties on both sides. Twenty Indian soldiers were killed in the violent clashes, the first instance in over four decades where lives were lost in a border dispute along the Line of Actual Control.

Since then, both India and China's Army have been conducting meetings at the Corps Commander level and disengagement has taken place in some sectors, but the status quo before April 2020 still looks far.

**Budget for cultural bodies linked to Tibetans slashed to Rs 20 crore**

06 February 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

The Centre has slashed budgetary allocation for Tibet House, the Dalai Lama's cultural centre and other Buddhist institutions. The budget for such bodies under the cultural ministry has been reduced from ₹50.19 crore in the current financial year to ₹20.19 crore for the next fiscal. Government sources claimed the budget has been allocated as per the demands made by them.

The list includes Tibet House, Centre for Buddhist Cultural Studies Tawang Monastery, Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, International Buddhist Confederation and GRL Monastic School Bomdila.

It also includes bodies such as Vrindavan Research Institute, Asiatic Society (Mumbai), Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji Sarasvati Mahal Library, Central Library and Connemara Public Library.

In the last fiscal, budget for these institutes was ₹71.51 crore, reduced to ₹50.19 crore for the current fiscal.

When contacted, BJD MP Sujeet Kumar, who heads When contacted, BJD MP Sujeet Kumar, who heads the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet, said, "It is unfortunate. Reduction in budgetary allocation especially for Tibet House, Tawang Monastery and Namgyal Institute is worrisome as these institutes work in preserving and protecting the Tibetan culture, which is under attack from China. The government of India should have enhanced the support," Kumar said.

## Tibet in Exile

**Freedom House gives Tibet global freedom score of zero**  
29 February 2024, [International Campaign for Tibet](#)

After 65 years of Chinese occupation, Tibet's global freedom score has now dropped all the way to zero, watchdog group Freedom House says in its new Freedom in the World report.

*"This score leaves no doubt that China's occupation of Tibet has been a global catastrophe,"* International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso said. *"For 65 years, the Chinese government has brutalized Tibet to the point that its global freedom score has now hit rock bottom. That is a clear indictment of China's failed policies in Tibet and the need for the Chinese government to get back to peaceful dialogue with Tibetan leaders to resolve this disastrous occupation."*

In Freedom House's 2024 report—released today, Feb. 29—Tibet has a political rights score of negative 2 out of a possible 40 and a civil liberties score of 2 out of a possible 60. That gives Tibet an overall score of 0 out of 100.

The zero rating is Tibet's worst in at least eight years. Tibet had an overall score of 1 in Freedom House's 2023 report.

### **65th anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising**

Tibet's new low score arrives as Tibetans prepare to mark the 65th anniversary of the March 10, 1959 Tibetan National Uprising and the subsequent flight of the Dalai Lama into exile on March 17, 1959.

Under China's rule, Tibetans lack the freedom to practice their Buddhist faith, speak their own language and even raise their own children.

One of the most horrific reports to emerge from Tibet in 2023—the year Freedom House analyzed for its report—was of China's state-run boarding schools in Tibet, which have separated over 1 million Tibetan children from their families and forced them to learn in Chinese with a curriculum focused on Chinese subjects.

The boarding schools are part of China's policy of "Sinification," which seeks to eliminate Tibetans' unique culture, language and identity by forcing them to assimilate as loyal subjects of the Chinese Communist Party.

China has also reportedly collected DNA from about 1 million residents of the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans much of central and western Tibet. According to Human Rights Watch, the Chinese government has even taken blood from children as young as 5 without their parents' consent.

China has also clamped down on Tibet's borders, making it nearly impossible for foreign journalists, diplomats and tourists to enter the country—and for Tibetans to escape as refugees.

### Resolving Tibet

Despite China's 65 years of brutality, Tibetans continue to show resistance and resilience.

Just this month, thousands of Tibetans in Derge (Chinese: Dege) County in eastern Tibet took part in mass protests against a proposed hydropower dam that will force two villages to vacate and destroy several Buddhist monasteries, including several centuries-old religious murals. Chinese authorities have reportedly arrested over 1,000 of the protestors.

Tibet has also received growing support from the international community.

At the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review of China in January, the number of states that raised concerns about Tibet more than doubled compared to China's last review in 2018.

Earlier this month, the US House passed the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act. Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the bipartisan bill will strengthen US efforts to push the Chinese government to get back to the negotiating table with Tibetan leaders to finally resolve China's 65-year occupation of Tibet.

[Tibetans in India march in solidarity with those arrested in dam protest in China](#)

28 February 2024, [RFA](#)

*Other rallies were held in India's Bir and Clementown, and in London.*



*Tibetans and Buddhist leaders march in Ladakh, India, on Feb. 28, 2024, to show their solidarity with Tibetans in Dege county, southwestern China's Sichuan province, who were arrested for protesting China's planned construction of a dam on the Drichu River.*

Tibetans and Buddhist leaders in northern India on Wednesday participated in a march to show their solidarity with Tibetans in southwestern China's Sichuan province arrested for peacefully protesting the planned construction of a dam.

Similar solidarity rallies were held in London and other cities the same day.

The large Buddhist community in Ladakh – in Jammu and Kashmir – expressed concerns that the dam project will submerge several significant monasteries with ancient murals that date back to the 13th century.

The Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, which organized the march and rally, said Buddhists there were concerned about the humanitarian situation and the violation of cultural and religious rights stemming from the expected impact of the dam on several monasteries and villages near the Drichu River.

On Feb. 23, police arrested more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks and residents, of Dege county in Sichuan's Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture, who had been protesting the construction of the Gangtuo Dam, meant to generate electricity.

If built, the power station could submerge monasteries in Dege's Wangbuding township and force residents of at least two villages near the Drichu River to relocate, sources told RFA.

Rigzin Dorjey, president of the youth wing of the Ladakh Buddhist Association Leh, said there is an urgent need to address the ongoing human rights abuses and environmental destruction perpetrated by China's communist government.

He underscored the interconnectedness of global Buddhist communities and the shared responsibility to stand in solidarity with Tibetans in their struggle for justice, freedom and dignity.

#### **'Collective commitment'**

Lobsang Tsering, vice president of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Ladakh, said the rally serves as "an expression of solidarity and support for Tibetans facing challenges and oppression in Dege county."

"It symbolizes a collective commitment to standing up against oppression, promoting human rights and preserving Tibetan culture and identity in the face of adversity," Tsering said.

Tenzin Peldon, who participated in the march in Ladakh said while Tibetans everywhere usually gather to raise their voices against China on politically significant dates such as March 10, known as Tibetan Uprising Day – which commemorates the thousands of lives lost in the 1959 uprising against China's invasion and occupation of their homeland – it is crucial that they come together during dire situations like the one being faced by Tibetans in Dege to collectively speak up against China's oppression.

"I urge all Tibetans in exile not to give up hope and to continue to raise awareness on online platforms about the plight of Tibetans in Dege county," she said.

Other protests were held in Bir village and Clement town in India, and in London, where Tibetans demonstrated outside the Chinese Embassy to show their support for the Dege county protesters, demand the release of the detainees, and call for an immediate halt to the dam construction.

"Risking arrest and torture, Tibetan residents of Kham Derge [Dege county] have shared images and videos of the protest with the

outside world," the Tibetan Community UK said in a statement. "They want the international community in the free world to know about their plight and to raise their voice."

Authorities released about 40 of the arrested monks on Feb. 26 and 27, RFA reported on Tuesday.

Chinese authorities released about 20 monks each on Monday and Tuesday, said the sources who spoke on condition of anonymity for safety reasons.

Also on Wednesday, Human Rights Watch called on Chinese authorities to immediately release the detained Tibetan monks.

"The Chinese authorities have long been hostile to public protests, but their response is especially brutal when the protests are by Tibetans and other ethnic groups," said Maya Wang, the group's acting China director, in a statement.

"Other governments should press Beijing to free these protesters, who have been wrongfully detained for exercising their basic rights," she said.

US official expresses concern over crackdown on Tibetans protesting dam

28 February 2024, [Rtv](#)

Chinese police have arrested more than 1,000 and beaten some during interrogation, sources say.

An American official expressed deep concern about the arrest of over 1,000 Tibetans protesting a dam project in central China that would destroy several Buddhist monasteries, saying the United States "stands with Tibetans in preserving their unique cultural, religious, and linguistic identity."

Tibetan advocacy groups condemned China's actions, calling for the immediate release of those detained.

On Feb. 23, police arrested more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks and residents, in Dege county in Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture, who had been peacefully protesting against the dam, which would also



force two villages to be relocated, sources told Radio Free Asia.

Over the weekend, police began interrogations, beating some detainees so badly that they required medical attention, sources told RFA.

Uzra Zeya, U.S. under secretary for civilian security, democracy and human rights and U.S. special coordinator for Tibetan Issues, said on X on Feb. 25 that she was deeply concerned by reports of the “mass arrests of Tibetans protesting the construction of a dam that threatens displacement of villages & destruction of monasteries.”

“China must respect human rights & freedom of expression and include Tibetans in the development & implementation of water and land management policies,” she tweeted.

“These centuries-old monasteries are home to hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist monks and contain irreplaceable cultural relics,” she wrote. “The U.S. stands with Tibetans in preserving their unique cultural, religious, and linguistic identity.”

‘Wiping out culture and religion’

The arrests “should be a reminder to the world of how brutal daily life under China’s occupation is for the Tibetan people,” a statement issued Monday on X from the International Campaign for Tibet by its president, Tencho Gyatso.

“China tries to hide its forced relocation of Tibetans, its destruction of their environment, and its attempts to wipe out their culture and religion,” the statement said.

Saying the protesters demonstrated “incredible courage,” Gyatso said they needed the support of the international community.

“We call on the Chinese government to free these Tibetans at once,” she said. “We also call on the U.S. and other governments to step up pressure on China to end its vicious occupation of Tibet.”

Four Tibetan NGOs based in Dharamsala, India, home to the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, issued a statement of solidarity with the Tibetan community in Dege county.

They said that the displacement of Tibetan communities is “not new phenomena,” just one of many examples.

“The continued disregard for the rights and well-being of Tibetans in the face of such development projects is unacceptable and demands immediate attention from the international community,” said the statement by the Tibetan Women’s Association, National Democratic Party of Tibet, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress and Students for a Free Tibet.

Environmental disruption

The four groups went on to say that the construction of the dam not only threatens the local Tibetan community but also poses a risk to the fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan plateau.

“Any disruption to Tibet’s rivers and a diversion of the rivers could have far-reaching consequences for the environment, biodiversity, and livelihoods of millions of people downstream,” they said.

William Nee, research and advocacy coordinator at Chinese Human Rights Defenders, or CHR D, told RFA that his organization was concerned about the situation of the detainees, whether they are being maltreated and if they have sufficient food.

RFA reported earlier that authorities told those who were arrested to bring bedding and food, suggesting they would not be released soon.

CHR D was also concerned whether authorities were giving those arrested access to relatives and lawyers, and whether they were being detained according to Chinese Criminal Procedure Law.

“But beyond that, there are also concerns about the livelihood of the potentially affected communities by the dam and whether this has been taken into consideration,” Nee said. “And also the cultural rights, given that this might impact monasteries – some having ancient murals going back to the 13th century.”

Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, speaker of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile, tweeted on X that Tibetans worldwide condemned the crackdown.

“We urge China to promptly release those detained and to cease the dam construction,”

he tweeted. “It is crucial for China to acknowledge the peaceful protests of Tibetans, addressing their concerns about preserving historic monasteries and safeguarding their homes.”

**Austria: Tibetan youths protest outside Chinese embassy in Vienna over human rights violations**

25 February 2024, [ANI](#)

Vienna [Austria], February 25 (ANI): Three youngsters from the Tibetan community in Austria staged a protest in front of the Chinese Embassy in Vienna on Saturday over the human rights violations perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party in Tibet. They urged the international community to unite and openly support the Tibetan Government-in-exile in their ongoing struggle to protect the human rights of Tibetans in Tibet. Adopting a novel protest, the young Tibetans used a projector and played videos of the forceful displacement of Tibetans by the Chinese in Tibet on the walls of the Chinese Embassy in Vienna. They also projected words highlighting the human rights violations of China and the cultural genocide carried out by China to erase the Tibetan identity.

The young Tibetans, associated with VTAG, Europe, also raised slogans against the large-scale environmental degradation happening in Tibet in the guise of huge projects that are unsustainable for the region.

During the protest, the young Tibetans also raised slogans in German to create awareness among the people in Austria that what is happening to Tibetans in Tibet is a deliberate extinction of a community, an identity. According to young Tibetans, these projects including huge defence establishments, and large dams would displace a large number of Tibetans from their native homeland. One of the main objectives behind such projects is to forcefully relocate Tibetans and erase their identity. The protesters stressed that the systematic disregard for the fundamental rights of Tibetans by the Chinese

government reflects a blatant violation of international human rights law. Protesters said that China, obligated to respect and adhere to mechanisms safeguarding people's rights, has been persecuting human rights defenders, forcibly resettling Tibetans, engaging in forced labour, fostering workplace discrimination, curtailing religious freedom and language rights, assimilating Tibetan children in boarding schools, and perpetrating cultural genocide. (ANI)

**Dalai Lama's 1959 escape route in Arunachal to be developed for spiritual tourism**

24 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

(TibetanReview.net, Feb24'24) – The government of the state of Arunachal Pradesh is developing the 1959 escape trail within India of Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, following China's annexation of Tibet into a spiritual and religious tourism circuit.

Little-known Lumla in western Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district would soon be on the national tourism map. The young Dalai Lama had passed through, even stayed in this area, during his escape from Lhasa to India, reported the PTI news agency Feb 23.

“We are developing the escape trail of His Holiness into a religious and spiritual tourism circuit which is going on. As many as five monoliths will be constructed in each place where the Dalai Lama spent the night during his journey to India from Tibet”, Tsering Lhamu the Lumla MLA, has told PTI.

The escape trail was stated to be through the business route that started in Tibet's Tsona district and ended at Khen-Dze-mani under the Zemithang circle in Tawang district.

On Mar 31, 1959, the Dalai Lama and a group of eight people along with another group of eighty people were received officially at Khen-Dze-Mani by the political officer of Tawang, the 5 Assam Rifles and the people of Zemithang, the report said.

Currently, a small gate known as 'Lhasa Dwar', the point where the Dalai Lama entered India, is marked by a 'Holy Tree', which is said to have

grown from a staff dug by the Dalai Lama during his escape. It is now worshipped as a relic marking the historic event.

Another notable point of interest in this area is stated to be a hanging bridge on the Indian side, followed by the Lhasa Dwar.

Then there is Gorsam Chorten, a little far from Lhasa Dwar, located 90 km from Tawang. It was founded by a Monpa monk named Lama Pradhar in the 12th century and is the largest Buddhist stupa in the region, the report said. Monpa is a major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh. The Dalai Lama stayed in the Gorsam Chorten for a day.

Zemithang is also being developed as a vibrant village in Tawang district under New Delhi's vibrant village programme to counter China's 'border defence villages' in occupied Tibet.

Lhamu has said two gompas at Thonglek and Lumla areas had been completed as part of the project while a museum is coming up at Lumla, which will display various artefacts related to the Dalai Lama.

Also, a 113 feet Maitreya Buddha (the coming Buddha) statue is coming up at Buri along the India-Bhutan border, under the NE scheme of Swadesh Darshan of the Union Tourism ministry for the development of Bhalukpong-Bomdila-Tawang tourism circuit, the report said.

Swadesh Darshan scheme is one of the flagship programmes of the ministry for the development of thematic circuits in the country in a planned and prioritised manner. Under the scheme, the government is focussing on the development of quality infrastructure with the objective of providing better experience and facilities to visitors while fostering economic growth.

[China's Policies Are 'Like a Python Squeezing Us Out of Our Breath Slowly', Says Tibetan Exiled Leader](#)  
21 February 2024, [News18](#)

As Tibetans prepare to mark 65 years since a failed uprising against Chinese rule and questions loom over the Dalai Lama's

successor, the diaspora's elected leader said Beijing is crushing his people.

Tibetans on March 10 will commemorate the 1959 uprising against Chinese forces that led the future Nobel laureate — and thousands of his followers — to cross snowy Himalayan passes into neighbouring India and set up a government in exile.

But the anniversary has also put the question of who will succeed the ageing Dalai Lama into sharp focus, with the choice likely to spark a controversial geopolitical contest. The charismatic spiritual leader already stepped down as his people's political head in 2011, passing the baton of secular power to a government chosen democratically by some 130,000 Tibetans across the world.

Penpa Tsering, born in India in 1967, was elected in 2021 as its second-ever leader, or sikyong. "If you look at the policies of the Chinese government today, they're squeezing us — like a python squeezing us out of our breath slowly," Tsering told AFP in an interview at the office of the Tibetan government in exile in India. "That's why we are dying a slow death."

Tibet — ruled with an iron fist by China since the 1950s — was historically an independent country, but Beijing maintains its long-held position that "Tibet is part of China".

#### – EMPIRES FALL –

Tsering readily admits the task of seeking a "resolution to the Sino-Tibetan conflict" with vastly more powerful China can seem overwhelming. But the committed Buddhist takes a long view of history. "Nothing is permanent," he said, sitting in front of a Tibetan flag in the hills above the northern Indian town of Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama also lives.

India has hosted the exiled Tibetan leadership for decades and is itself a regional rival of China — tensions between the world's two most populous countries flared after a deadly Himalayan border clash in 2020. "There have been a lot of empires in this world, and every empire has fallen," Tsering said. But as the

campaign for a free Tibet drags on, many worry there is a more time-pressing issue ahead.

The 88-year-old Dalai Lama has shown no indication he faces serious health problems, but the internationally recognisable face of Tibet has dramatically reduced his once-frenetic globetrotting. “He’s always very aware of his mortality... So one day he will die, that is understood, that’s a matter of fact,” Tsering said. “But, of course, we like to hope that there will be some resolution to the cause of Tibet during the lifetime of this Dalai Lama.”

Tibetan Buddhists believe the Dalai Lama is the 14th reincarnation of the leader of an institution dating back six centuries, chosen by monks according to ancient Buddhist traditions. Many expect Beijing will name a successor itself, raising the likelihood of rival nominations for the post. When he stepped aside in favour of the elected government, the Dalai Lama said: “No recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends”, singling out China.

#### – ‘CONTROL THE TIBETAN PEOPLE’ –

Tsering believes the spiritual leader still has decades to live. “His Holiness keeps saying that ‘I will live up to 113,’” he said. “So I chide my Chinese friends, saying: ‘You are waiting for this Dalai Lama to die. ““You are not concerned about the living 14th, but you are more concerned about the yet to come 15th — because you know that if you can control the Dalai Lama, you can control the Tibetan people.””

Tsering stressed he had no immediate concerns. “Let us see whether His Holiness the Dalai Lama outlives the Communist Party, or the Communist Party outlives His Holiness,” he added. “Even this morning, His Holiness was saying: ‘I have not lost one of my teeth. I’ll live long’. So let’s see.” Tsering sometimes travels to the mountainous Indian border to stare across to the homeland he has never visited, he said, to “fulfil my emotional needs”.

He does not seek full independence for Tibet, in line with the long-standing “Middle Way” policy of the Dalai Lama, who believes that pushing demands beyond autonomy would be

suicidal. But the Dalai Lama has also rejected Beijing’s longstanding demand that he publicly agree Tibet was historically part of China, a refusal cited by Beijing in declining dialogue with his representatives since 2010. Tsering, who campaigns for the rights of the estimated seven million Tibetans he said live under Chinese control, said “back-channel” contacts were in place with Beijing and would continue. “If there’s no hope, the cause itself is lost.”

Division and factionalism in exile “regrettably shameful”, says Dalai Lama in new letter

21 February 2024, [Phayul](#)

A letter to felicitate the 50th founding anniversary of the Kollegal Dhondenling Tibetan settlement in South India, by the Tibetan spiritual leader His Holiness the Dalai Lama discouraged the divisive leanings among exile Tibetans including the leadership. Amidst the celebrations, a poignant message from the octogenarian Tibetan leader was delivered by the President of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), Sikyong Penpa Tsering, who graced the event as the chief guest on Saturday.

The message conveyed by the foremost exiled spiritual leader through the Sikyong Penpa Tsering encapsulated a crucial theme. The octogenarian leader implored exiled Tibetans to prioritise unity and solidarity, echoing the resilience demonstrated by Tibetans inside Tibet in the face of severe repression by the Chinese communist government. He cautioned against factionalism, urging the community to show unity displayed by Tibetans inside Tibet.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, while reading the letter from His Holiness the Dalai Lama highlighted the following key points. “Despite living under the illegal occupation by the Communist Chinese, the spirit of unity among Tibetans inside Tibet has endured. However, some living in exile are straying from the path of selflessness. Divisions are being sown within our community by those with narrow minds, who seek to emphasise factions based on

regional origins (Cholka) or religious affiliations (Cholug). This is regrettably shameful. Therefore, those entrusted with leadership roles must be careful," the letter expressed.

The letter from His Holiness the Dalai Lama, highlighted by Sikyong emphasises a key aspect of the divisive politics that have emerged within the Tibetan exile community, particularly during parliamentary proceedings and during campaign trails between elections. These factions often become visible particularly during parliamentary sessions, leading to stalemates and disruptions in the proceedings in recent times, thus causing negative impact on the unity and coherence among members of the Tibetan diaspora.

The remainder of the sixth session of the 17th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPiE), faced significant challenges, leading to the rescheduling of sessions on March 13 to 16 due to the unavailability of the required quorum needed to officially convene the session. The session also encountered disruptions following a walk out by some members of the parliament.

However, many say that this unprecedented trend of prolonged deadlock shows the inability of the parliament to function effectively, thereby jeopardising the governance and stability of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration. Others say that such prolonged disruptions undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the Tibetan leadership, and contribute to the already growing trust deficit between the leadership and the masses.

**Beijing crushing Tibetans, exiled political leader says**  
21 February 2024, [France24](#)

*Dharamsala (India) (AFP)* – As Tibetans prepare to mark 65 years since a failed uprising against Chinese rule and questions loom over the Dalai Lama's successor, the diaspora's

elected leader said Beijing is crushing his people.

Tibetans on March 10 will commemorate the 1959 uprising against Chinese forces that led the future Nobel laureate -- and thousands of his followers -- to cross snowy Himalayan passes into neighbouring India and set up a government in exile.

But the anniversary has also put the question of who will succeed the ageing Dalai Lama into sharp focus, with the choice likely to spark a controversial geopolitical contest.

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"If you look at the policies of the Chinese government today, they're squeezing us -- like a python squeezing us out of our breath slowly," Tsering told AFP in an interview at the office of the Tibetan government in exile in India.

"That's why we are dying a slow death."

Tibet -- ruled with an iron fist by China since the 1950s -- was historically an independent country, but Beijing maintains its long-held position that "Tibet is part of China".

### **Empires fall**

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"Nothing is permanent," he said, sitting in front of a Tibetan flag in the hills above the northern Indian town of Dharamsala, where the Dalai Lama also lives.

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But as the campaign for a free Tibet drags on, many worry there is a more time-pressing issue ahead.

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"But, of course, we like to hope that there will be some resolution to the cause of Tibet during the lifetime of this Dalai Lama."

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### 'Control the Tibetan people'

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But the Dalai Lama has also rejected Beijing's longstanding demand that he publicly agree Tibet was historically part of China, a refusal cited by Beijing in declining dialogue with his representatives since 2010.

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"If there's no hope, the cause itself is lost."

US House passes bill recognising Tibet's unresolved political status

16 February 2024, [Phayul](#)

In a display of bipartisan unity, the United States House of Representatives made a historic decision on Thursday, passing the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act'. This landmark legislation not only recognises Tibet's unresolved political status but also holds China accountable for violating the legitimate right to self-determination of the Tibetan people.

The bill, introduced by long-time Tibet supporters Representative Jim McGovern of Massachusetts and Representative Michael McCaul of Texas, alongside Senators Jeff Merkley of Oregon and Todd Young of Indiana, aims to affirm the United States government's stance on Tibet's legal status in the international arena.

Several members of Congress spoke in support of the Resolve Tibet Act. Rep. McGovern, known for his unwavering dedication to human rights, stressed on the importance of standing in solidarity with the Tibetan people. "It has been more than 60 years since the People's Republic of China forced His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama into exile and took control of Tibet

against the will of its people. The dispute between the Chinese and Tibetans over Tibet's status and governance has persisted ever since. In spite of the willingness of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people to resolve Tibet status in governance through dialogue. With dialogue blocked, the PRC has continued its unceasing efforts to erode Tibetan history, Tibetan language, Tibetan culture and Tibetan religion. A few years ago, I was on delegation with Speaker Pelosi. We went to Tibet and we saw first-hand the PRC's repression against the people of Tibet essentially trying to erase Tibetans as a people."

"This bill that we are discussing here today seeks to end that. By explicitly recognising the Tibetan people are a people with a distinct religious, cultural, linguistic and historical identity. By reminding all concerned that people's and not least the Tibetan people have a right to self-determination under international human rights law and by requiring the US government to actively counter the PRC's propaganda about Tibet. Like the false claim that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times. A position that the United States has never accepted and there was no basis for such a claim. Through these measures, we hope to kickstart dialogue between Tibet and China, in keeping with the longstanding US policy," he emphasised.

"The decades old dispute between Tibet and China started as an armed conflict of invasion, resistance and insurgency. In the long-run, the only guarantee against the resumption of large scale violence is for the PRC to fully respect the human rights and dignity of the Tibetan people. A vote for this bill is a vote to recognise the rights of the Tibetan people and it is a vote to insist on resolving the dispute between Tibet and People's Republic of China peacefully and in accordance with international law through dialogue and without preconditions. There is still an opportunity to do this but time is running out. And again, I urge my colleagues to support this bill because it is about standing up for human rights. It is about standing up for the

Tibetan people who have been repressed for far too long," he further added.

The bill will recognise Tibet's unresolved political status and hold China suspect of violating Tibetan people's legitimate right to self-determination. The bill also aims to counter the narrative propagated by the Chinese government, which asserts that Tibet has been an integral part of China since ancient times. Additionally, the bill also makes clear that Tibet's land mass does not only include the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) but also the significant Tibetan-inhabited areas in Gansu, Sichuan, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces.

Furthermore, the bill faults China for its refusal to engage in discussions with the Dalai Lama or his representatives. The bill also seeks to empower the position of US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, currently held by Under Secretary Uzra Zeya to counter CCP's propaganda and address Tibet-related concerns effectively.

This unprecedented move by the US House committee under the Biden Administration is followed by two other Acts that work on demanding more access from inside Tibet and reaffirming that the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama falls strictly in the hands of the Tibetan people; Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (2018) and Tibetan Policy and Support Act (2020) respectively.

[China fails to stop New Jersey Township Mayor from raising Tibetan flag to celebrate Losar](#)

14 February 2024, [RTV](#)

Losar, the Tibetan New Year, which fell on Feb 10 this time, was celebrated in the US State Department while Mayor Michael Melham of Belleville Township in the state of New Jersey flew the Tibetan national flag on Feb 9, rejecting a written objection from China's vice consul in New York.

Extending warmest wishes to all those celebrating Losar, the Tibetan New Year, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement Feb 9, "On this first day of the Year

of the Wood Dragon, we celebrate the strength and perseverance of the Tibetan community around the globe. Here in the United States, tens of thousands of Tibetan-Americans are integral to the preservation of Tibetans' distinct cultural, linguistic, and religious heritage."

He wished Tibetans celebrating all across the world peace and prosperity in the new year.

Meanwhile, in Belleville, Mayor Melham went on to raise the Tibetan flag, rejecting a second last-second letter, from China's vice consul in New York, imploring the mayor to cancel the noon event at town hall, claiming the flag was a symbol of "an illegal separatist political group," reported tapinto.net, cbsnews.com and other news outlets Feb 10.

The reports said the mayor responded in writing to vice consul Huang Ping, saying: "Here in Belleville, New Jersey, we pride ourselves on fostering an environment of inclusivity and acceptance, regardless of nationality or territorial affiliation. Our community's rich history is deeply rooted in these principles, shaping the very essence of who we are."

The mayor has added: "It's essential to clarify that our intentions are not aimed at challenging the sovereignty of any nation. Instead, our gesture symbolizes solidarity with the Tibetan people and their aspirations for freedom and self-determination."

"We stand with the Tibetan people in their struggle for autonomy and respect for their cultural heritage," the mayor has concluded, urging Ping to delve into Belleville's "fascinating Chinese history, which spans over a century and a half."

The mayor has also noted that Belleville was live-streaming a Chinese New Year event on Feb 10, serving "as a testament to our deep appreciation for Chinese culture and traditions. It is a reflection of our longstanding relationship with the Chinese community."

He has also said, "As a Township, we remain committed to fostering understanding, dialogue, and mutual respect among all peoples, both locally and globally."

The mayor said his decision was not political and that he sent a respectful letter back to China's vice consul saying the flag went up because his diverse community respects all voices, according to the cbsnews.com report.

This year, the Tibetan New Year fell on the same day as the Chinese Lunar New Year.

On Losar, Dalai Lama exhorts Tibetans to uphold culture  
11 February 2024, [The Sentinel](#)

Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama on Saturday greeted Tibetans in Tibet and in exile on Tibetan New Year, Losar 2151 -- the year of the Wood-Dragon.

In a video message, the spiritual leader said: "Despite undergoing great difficulties in exile and living under a powerful Communist Chinese regime, our people, the majority of whom are inside of Tibet, have remained unscathed while I have been the leader.

"Although the Communist Chinese rulers, after the 'so-called peaceful liberation', have wished that we Tibetans forget our religious faith, we have held onto our convictions and our culture even more firmly -- this is very good. Today, there is a renewed interest in Buddhism, not only among Tibetans, but even among some Chinese.

"In many parts of the world today, Tibetan spiritual and cultural traditions are regarded as logical, rational and of practical benefit when closely considered since they enable us to transform our minds in a positive way and bring about inner peace."

According to the Tibetan lunar calendar, Losar is the first day of the New Year. Traditionally, it is celebrated in a big way. This year, the festival falls on February 10. The three-day festival marks sacred and secular practices like prayers, ceremonies, rituals, and folk dancing and merrymaking.

The elderly Buddhist monk said: "Nowadays, an increasing number of people in Western countries are taking interest in Tibetan culture and spirituality. I'm also aware of an increasing number of Western scientists who admire the methods for developing a kind heart that is

found in our culture, although they lack any religious belief."

Saying that the Communist Chinese have attempted systematically to eliminate spiritual and cultural heritage, His Holiness in the video message added: "However, it has become clear that rather than destroying it, there is a renewed interest in our cultural traditions in the world today."

Wishing, in particular, to express appreciation for his fellow Tibetans in Tibet for the unflinching faith and devotion they possess, he said: "Still, I think it's important that the new generation of Tibetans has a deep understanding of the good customs we have upheld for more than a thousand years, not just because they are our customs but also because they accord with reason."

"In the reality of today's world, I think it's necessary that the new generation take a fresh look at the traditions we've preserved in the light of Western scientific interest. They need to understand why people in the West with no particular belief in religion take interest in our traditions.

"And they need to be able to recognize the value of the centuries-old cherished treasures of Tibet in order to preserve them well." (IANS)

China opens Lhasa for Tibetans from other regions for Losar, but tight restrictions remain

11 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

(TibetanReview.net, Feb11'24) – China announced a relaxation in restrictions it had imposed in 2018 on the entry into Tibet's capital Lhasa of Tibetans from outside the region in a move to revive its flagging economy ahead of the Tibetan New Year, or Losar, festivities, reported the Tibetan service of *rfa.org* Feb 9. But restrictions, bordering on a ban, continues to remain on Tibetans seeking to travel to the other countries.

Besides, the relaxations have come with restrictions which severely curtail one of the main Tibetan purposes for undertaking the visit, the report said, citing three local Tibetan sources.

Most of the Tibetans who make it to Lhasa after the relaxation of entry rules have been Kham and Amdo people whose historical Tibetan regions are now parts of Sichuan and Qinghai provinces. And their main or only purpose is to undertake pilgrimage to the major Buddhist religious sites that include the Potala Palace, the Barkhor Street, the Jokhang Temple and the Norbulingka Palace.

The relaxation has led to the largest number of arrivals from the traditional Kham and Amdo provinces of Tibet.

However, the TAR authorities have imposed restrictions on visits to a number of these sites, including the Jokhang Temple, the holiest site in Tibetan Buddhism. It has decided to open the site on the first day of Losar, on Feb 10, and then close it from Feb 11 to 16.

Besides, limits have been placed on visits to other religious sites as well, including on forming of large gatherings, during the 15-day Losar celebrations. Devotees must present their identification cards before participating in religious rituals near temples and pilgrimage sites, the report said, citing a Lhasa police order.

Until last year, Tibetans from other regions were required to submit to an office in Lhasa a prescribed application after obtaining the form for the purpose from a local office, while a resident of the host city was required to provide guarantee that the visitors would not engage in any protest activity.

The report also said Tibetans continued to face severe restrictions on undertaking travels outside the country.

"I went to Nepal with a few of my friends last month but in order to go on that trip, I had to deposit 100,000 Nepali rupee [US\$750] and give the name of someone I knew in Lhasa as security," the report quoted one of the sources as saying, speaking, like the others, on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. Besides, only group travel, accompanied by a travel agency representative, was allowed.

"I felt like a prisoner," the source has said. In addition, "It's almost impossible for Tibetans to travel to the United States and other

Western countries," a third source has told *rfa.org*.

**Tibetan Flag Raised in Belleville: An Act of Solidarity Amid Diplomatic Tensions**  
10 February 2024, [BNN](#)

In a defiant act of solidarity, Mayor Michael Melham of Belleville, New Jersey, raised the Tibetan flag on February 11, 2024, honoring a community member, Yangchen Nodong, who fled Tibet in 1960. This gesture came despite a last-minute plea from the Chinese government to cancel the event.

#### **A Last-Minute Plea Ignored**

In a display of unwavering support for Tibetan exiles, Mayor Michael Melham of Belleville, New Jersey, raised the Tibetan flag on February 11, 2024. This significant event was held to honor Yangchen Nodong, a Belleville resident who escaped Tibet in 1960. The Chinese government attempted to thwart the flag-raising by sending a last-minute letter urging Mayor Melham to call off the ceremony.

Despite the Chinese government's efforts, Mayor Melham refused to back down, stating that his township respects all voices. Belleville is known for its diverse population, and the mayor believes that embracing this diversity is essential for fostering unity and acceptance.

#### **A Symbol of Freedom and Suppression**

Tibet has been an autonomous region of China since 1950, but many exiles argue that their culture and religion have been systematically suppressed under communist rule. The Tibetan flag, banned in Tibet, has become a powerful symbol of freedom and self-determination for those who have been forced to flee their homeland.

For Yangchen Nodong, the flag-raising ceremony was a deeply emotional experience. "Raising the Tibetan flag in Belleville is a testament to our resilience and the unwavering hope for freedom," she said. "I am grateful to Mayor Melham and the people of Belleville for standing with us."

The ceremony was attended by members of the Tibetan community, local residents, and

several dignitaries. Many participants expressed their appreciation for Mayor Melham's support and his commitment to inclusivity.

#### **A Dance of Diplomacy and Defiance**

Mayor Melham's decision to raise the Tibetan flag has sparked a diplomatic dance between local and international interests. While the Chinese government has condemned the move, stating that it "interferes with China's internal affairs," Mayor Melham remains steadfast in his belief that the gesture was a symbol of solidarity and respect for the Tibetan people.

The mayor's actions have also drawn attention to the broader issue of human rights in Tibet. Activists and supporters of the Tibetan cause are hopeful that this event will help raise awareness and lead to a more open and inclusive dialogue about the situation in Tibet. As the sun set on the flag-raising ceremony, the Tibetan flag fluttered proudly in the breeze, a powerful reminder of the enduring spirit of the Tibetan people and their quest for freedom.

In defiance of a last-minute plea from the Chinese government, Mayor Michael Melham of Belleville, New Jersey, raised the Tibetan flag on February 11, 2024. This act of solidarity honored Yangchen Nodong, a Tibetan exile who escaped her homeland in 1960. The flag-raising ceremony was a poignant symbol of hope and freedom for the Tibetan community, as well as a testament to Belleville's commitment to inclusivity and acceptance.

As the Tibetan flag continues to fly in Belleville, it serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for freedom and self-determination faced by the Tibetan people. Amidst diplomatic tensions, Mayor Melham's unwavering support for the Tibetan cause highlights the importance of standing up for human rights and the preservation of cultural identity.

**'Lack of information from Tibet is due to high level of Chinese gov't repression'**

07 February 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)



(TibetanReview.net, Feb07'24) – The reason why not much is heard about, and therefore reported on, on the human rights situation in Tibet today is because it remains the least free country on earth, an international summit on religious freedom held in Washington, DC, was told last week.

“Today we don’t hear much about Tibet. And the reason is exactly because it’s the least-free country on Earth,” Mr Namgyal Choedup, Washington-based representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to North America, told the meeting.

He was one of the main speakers at the summit’s breakout session, which was also addressed by the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief Nazila Ghanea and Campaign for Uyghurs Founder and Executive Director Rushan Abbas.

This panel of the summit’s session on violations in surveillance states was developed by Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) with the groups Boat People SOS and the Campaign for Uyghurs.

Tibet also featured in the summit’s panel discussion on challenges and opportunities in freedom of religion or belief in Asia. This panel also highlighted the situation in Nepal, including for Tibetan refugees there, and the situation in Sri Lanka. ICT’s Mr Franz Matzner moderated the discussion.

Namgyal traced the current nature of the state of Chinese government surveillance in Tibet Autonomous Region to the 2011-16 tenure of its regional Party Secretary Mr Chen Quanguo, who developed a system of mass surveillance and militarization that has only grown since. Chen was later moved to East Turkestan (Xinjiang) to become the architect of alleged genocide of mostly Uyghur Muslims.

“What we have is kind of reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution period,” he said, referring to the decade-long violent purges led by Chairman Mao Zedong.

China has largely shut down access to Tibet from the outside world, with Tibetans being even forced to spy on one another, he said.

Any individual act of dissent leads to collective punishment in the form of mass repression and immediate shutdown of internet access to prevent the news from spreading, he said, citing the more recent example of the protest self-immolation in Tibet’s capital Lhasa last year by Mr Tsewang Norbu, a popular young Tibetan singer.

He also cited the example of a Tibetan university student named Tsedon in Lhasa who was detained by Chinese authorities on Dec 26 last year and reported dead in police detention on Jan 15, with no avenue to verify these reports.

Namgyal accused China of implementing a policy of Sinification by means of eliminating Tibet’s unique civilization by forcing its people to give up their language, religion and culture.

## Commentaries

China says Hong Kong’s ‘one country, two systems’ is permanent

28 February 2024, [The Japan Times](#)

Beijing’s point person to Hong Kong said the city’s special governing formula will remain a “permanent structure,” the South China Morning Post reported, as the Chinese official sought to boost confidence in the Asian finance hub.

Xia Baolong, who leads the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, on Monday said the “one country, two systems” principle helps set Hong Kong apart from mainland Chinese cities, the Post said. The newspaper cited an unidentified attendee of a meeting between the Chinese official and about 40 local and foreign business chambers.

Hong Kong is guaranteed a high degree of autonomy until at least 2047 under a political arrangement enshrined in the city’s constitution, but Beijing’s political crackdown has eroded rights once seen as fundamental to its success. Prominent observers including former Morgan Stanley Asia chair Stephen

Roach have called on Beijing to commit to the model to revive growth in the city.

Xia has embarked on a weeklong inspection trip in Hong Kong as the city is pushing to enact a domestic security law. The proposal has raised concern among the finance community about potential chilling effect on open discussion of economic and policy issues.

In his meeting with business representatives, Xia highlighted the city's judicial system, stock market, large presence of international banks and proficiency in English among its distinct advantages, the official was reported as saying, citing an attendee.

His reported remarks add to Chinese top leaders' previous vow to maintain Hong Kong's semiautonomous status. President Xi Jinping said in July 2022 of the "one country, two systems" policy: "There is no reason for us to change such a good policy, and we must adhere to it in the long run."

Chamber representatives discussed topics including Hong Kong's integration with mainland China and the proposed security bill known as Article 23 during their 90 minute meeting with Xia, the city's Chief Executive John Lee told reporters Monday.

Xia's trip comes at a crucial time for Hong Kong's political and economic future. The city briefly lost its place to India as the world's fourth-largest stock market earlier this year as global capital poured out of China.

In 2020, Beijing tightened its grip over Hong Kong by imposing a broad national security law, a move that followed historic and sometimes violent protests in the former British colony. The crackdown on civil liberties, coupled with strict Covid curbs, has prompted thousands of residents to leave Hong Kong in recent years, leading to a talent drain on the financial sector that's a linchpin of the city.

Lee last month unveiled a broad plan to pass the city's own security legislation, which offers vague definitions of issues like state secrets and espionage. The one-month consultation period on the Article 23 bill ends Wednesday, when the city is also set to unveil its annual budget.

"They basically said that they understood the reason for it, and they supported it, because in their country, they have similar laws, and they don't have any effect on their consideration and confidence in Hong Kong," Lee said of foreign chambers' comments on Article 23 during the media session. "In fact, a few even said that, with the stability ensured, then there is a good foundation for development."

[Expanding Forced Labor in Xinjiang: New Report Exposes CCP's Growing Atrocities Against Uyghurs](#)  
27 February 2024, [BNN](#)

Unveil the escalating forced labor practices against Uyghurs in Xinjiang, marking a grim advancement in the Chinese Communist Party's human rights violations. Explore the transition from re-education camps to the 'Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer' program, and the international response to combat these harrowing discoveries.

A recent investigation by Adrian Zenz for The Jamestown Foundation unveils the escalating forced labor practices against Uyghurs in Xinjiang, marking a grim advancement in the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) human rights violations. This intensification is part of a systematic attempt to control, assimilate, and erase Uyghur culture through what is now the largest state-imposed forced labor system in the world.

#### **From Re-Education to Forced Labor**

The transition from notorious re-education camps to the 'Poverty Alleviation Through Labor Transfer' program represents a strategic shift by the CCP to make forced labor operations less detectable while extending their impact. Adrian Zenz's rigorous analysis indicates a sinister plan to transfer a significantly higher number of Uyghur workers to other provinces in 2023, under the guise of economic development and poverty reduction. This move not only intends to dilute the Uyghur presence in Xinjiang but also subjects them to severe exploitation and cultural erasure.

#### **International Response and Legislative Actions**

In response to these harrowing discoveries, the United States has taken a firm stance through legislative measures, notably the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, aiming to block imports of goods produced with forced labor in Xinjiang. Furthermore, the recent passage of the Uyghur Policy Act by the House of Representatives underscores a growing international commitment to combatting the CCP's human rights abuses, providing a glimmer of hope for Uyghur activists seeking justice and the cessation of forced labor practices.

#### **Looking Forward: Implications and Challenges**

The revelations brought to light by Zenz's research pose significant challenges for global trade relations and the ethical responsibilities of multinational corporations. The persistent efforts by the CCP to obscure the true nature and scale of forced labor in Xinjiang necessitate vigilant and coordinated international action. As the world grapples with these findings, the fate of the Uyghur community hangs in the balance, prompting a crucial reflection on the moral imperatives that govern global economic and political engagements.

As the international community continues to digest the implications of these findings, the spotlight on Xinjiang's forced labor camps serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing human rights crisis. The pursuit of justice for the Uyghurs remains a critical test of the world's commitment to human dignity and freedom.

#### **Leadership Psychology of China's Xi Jinping**

26 February 2024, [The Diplomat](#)

The Diplomat author Mercy Kuo regularly engages subject-matter experts, policy practitioners, and strategic thinkers across the globe for their diverse insights into U.S. Asia policy. This conversation with Dr. Kenneth Dekleva – professor of Psychiatry and director of Psychiatry-Medicine Integration at UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, Texas; senior fellow at the George H.W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations; and

previously regional medical officer/psychiatrist with the U.S. Dept. of State from 2002-2016 – is the 403rd in “The Trans-Pacific View Insight Series.” The views expressed in this interview are entirely his own and do not represent the views of the U.S. government, the U.S. Department of State, or UT Southwestern Medical Center.

#### **Compare and contrast Xi Jinping's past and present leadership psychology.**

Xi Jinping has been president of China for over a decade, and as one of the most powerful leaders in the world today, his decisions have profound consequences for economic security, stability, and world peace. An understanding of Xi's leadership psychology is critical in understanding his response to crises, his negotiating style, and how he can be expected to meet China's economic and political challenges over the next decade.

Xi is rational, ruthless, and resilient. He is a formidable adversary and is often underestimated, including by various components of the U.S. intelligence community, who have in his case often confused status and ideological biases with ability. His successes embody his ability to wed his remarkable personal narrative with that of aspirational objectives for China, such as the Chinese Dream of Great Rejuvenation, drawing upon a combination of Chinese nationalist and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) themes.

Diplomats, business leaders, and dignitaries who have met with Xi have described him as polite, restrained, and a good listener. The comments of giants such as the late Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and the late U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger are instructive. Lee, who had met every previous Chinese leader, including Mao, stated, “I would put him in Nelson Mandela's class of persons. A person with enormous emotional stability who does not allow his personal misfortunes to affect his judgment. In other words, he is impressive.” In July 2011, Kissinger described Xi as “more assertive, there is a significant presence when he enters a

room. His generation has been steeled by suffering.”

#### **Identify Xi’s decision-making blind spots.**

Xi is a true believer, believing in the CCP’s primacy, and in China’s potential for greatness and rejuvenation. Xi has repeatedly stated that “the East is rising, and the West is in decline.” Xi’s exceptionalism, while linked to his personal and political self-confidence, represents a potential blind spot.

Having visited America on numerous occasions since 1985, Xi has to appreciate America’s exceptionalism and greatness. But Xi likely misses America’s resilience, a different part of its exceptionalism. It’s an easy mistake, when America remains politically, socially, and economically divided, inward-facing, and weary after two decades of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Had Xi visited America in 1979, he would have seen a country equally beset by – in President Carter’s words – “malaise,” stagflation, and political/military decline. But the election of President Reagan changed all that. Xi ignores such facts at his peril.

And as Xi ages into a third (and possibly a fourth) five-year term, the risk exists that he will, like many aging, autocratic leaders, exhibit a larger degree of cognitive rigidity in his decision-making.

Xi, beholden to Marxist dialectical reasoning, is seen as rigid and ideological – an easy bias to see. But doing so misses Xi’s pragmatism. Xi’s shift in course after COVID lockdowns and his recent appeals to the private sector, as China struggles with rising youth unemployment, high levels of debt, and sluggish growth, highlight his flexibility. Diplomatically, Xi has recently shifted his language, course, and tone in reducing tensions with America, where relations had fallen to new lows. This was dramatically seen in his November 2023 speech – which received a standing ovation – to hundreds of American business executives in San Francisco.

In uncertain areas such as economic slowdowns, response to COVID, foreign relations, trade, crises (e.g., the spy balloon incident of 2023), and China’s role in diplomacy

involving Russia, North Korea, Ukraine, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel, Xi has navigated more cautiously, even patiently, while shifting tactics to align his and China’s national interests within the ancient Chinese paradigm of *shi*, outlined by Professor David Shin as “the alignment of forces, the propensity of things, or the potential born of disposition.”

#### **Examine Xi Jinping’s leadership interactions and dynamics with global leaders.**

Xi has met with Russia’s President Putin 42 times since coming to power in 2012. Xi has spoken of their closeness, referring to him as a “dear friend,” and highlighting their “deepening trust” and a “deep friendship.” During the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, both leaders cited their “no limits friendship.” Many external observers have read more deeply into this friendship than it warrants. I’d suggest that it’s more uneven and unequal, where Xi (and China) is the stronger of the two partners.

Xi’s relationship with North Korea’s Chairman Kim Jong Un is also intriguing. While China and North Korea have been – in the words of Mao – “as close as lips and teeth” – this has not always been the case since Xi came to power. He and Kim only first met during 2018 and 2019, before and after Kim’s historic Singapore summit with President Trump. Both visuals and readouts of their meetings hinted at a growing closeness, but for both, a pragmatic one, as China needs a politically stable North Korea as a strategic buffer vis-à-vis South Korea, and North Korea is deeply reliant on China economically.

Xi’s self-confidence comes across most notably in his interactions with many other foreign leaders, choosing when to meet, whom to meet, and how to meet with them, in the service of his and China’s national interests. This has emerged in his interactions with leaders at the 2022 SCO Summit, the 2022 BRICS Summit, and his recent meetings with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, European Council President Charles Michel, Germany’s Olaf Scholz, France’s Emmanuel Macron, and numerous American

business and political dignitaries, including the late Henry Kissinger, Bill Gates, Elon Musk, Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, Governor of California Gavin Newsom, and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

**Analyze Xi Jinping’s calculus toward China’s approach to Taiwan.**

Will Xi invade Taiwan? Xi has repeatedly stated that reunification will occur, peacefully or otherwise, and yet he – not a disruptor *per se* – is unlikely to make an impulsive or irrational decision to invade Taiwan. If a red line were crossed, and Taiwan declared independence, Xi could be forced to act militarily, as well as diplomatically, economically, and politically.

A possible scenario involves China further isolating Taiwan, using a whole gamut of government approaches, including air defense patrols, naval blockades, espionage, China Coast Guard patrols, cyberattacks, political/economic pressure, diplomatic pressure, and legal measures. Russia’s war setbacks in Ukraine may have chastened Xi, but Ukraine’s failed counteroffensive and loss of fiscal year 2024 U.S. congressional funding due to U.S. domestic political changes may further embolden Xi.

**Assess how Xi’s leadership style could define China’s future direction.**

Xi remains a confident, powerful leader, who has achieved immense successes, including continuing to lift hundreds of millions of Chinese out of poverty, a significant achievement and component of Xi’s Dream of Chinese Great Rejuvenation. During his February 2023 visit to Moscow, in parting with President Putin, Xi stated that global power dynamics are shifting, in an evolving multipolar world, and that “together we should push forward changes that have not happened for 100 years.” Xi’s response to such challenges will define both his and China’s legacy during the 21st century.

Understanding Xi’s leadership style, political psychology, and governance outcomes is critical as a rising China asserts itself in Asia, the Global South, and the Middle East, and

increasingly counters America’s stature, influence, and global power.

[New Report: Uyghur Forced Labor Increased in 2023](#)  
26 February 2024, [Bitter Winter](#)

*Under personal instructions from Xi Jinping, Uyghurs continue to be victims of forced “labor transfers” inside and outside Xinjiang. The aim is not economic only.*

“Bitter Winter” is often caught in social media controversies where naïve netizens or, more often, CCP trolls argue that all is well in Xinjiang and that Uyghurs are coercively moved to other provinces for forced labor is something that might have happened in isolated incidents in the past but is no longer happening now.

A new report has now been published, which documents that Uyghur forced labor is increasing rather than decreasing. It will not persuade the trolls but perhaps will raise some doubts in the minds of the naïve fellow travelers.

Researcher extraordinaire Adrian Zenz’s new report is about “Forced Labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region: Assessing the Continuation of Coercive Labor Transfers in 2023 and Early 2024.” Quoting mostly documents from the CCP itself, Zenz reports that in 2023 the authorities set a goal of increasing transfer of Uyghur workers to other provinces by 38%. As it often happens in China if bureaucrats want to avoid the risk of being demoted or worse, the quota was not only achieved but exceeded.

“Labor transfer” is a label covering two different Xinjiang realities. It indicates both the forced transfer of workers from agriculture and other jobs they had freely chosen to mandatory factory work. This includes work at factories by Uyghurs detained in “transformation through education” camps, renamed in official documents “Vocational Skills Education and Training Centers.” From there, inmates are bussed to the forced workplaces. The second reality is the “Poverty Alleviation” through “Pairing Assistance” connecting Xinjiang to other regions and



provinces where Uyghur workers are transferred.

Concerning the first project, “by the third quarter of 2023, the XUAR had already exceeded its entire 2022 labor transfer volume of 3.03 million person-times. State media announced the transfer of 3.05 million person-times rural surplus laborers between January and September, surpassing the state-mandated quota by 10.9 percent.” Let me repeat that all these data come from official CCP sources.

As for the second project, Xi Jinping in person when he came to Xinjiang in August 2023 told local CCP cadres that “the Pairing Assistance program that links eastern Chinese provinces with ethnic regions in Xinjiang for cross-provincial labor transfers needed to be strengthened.” One strategy used for this is that “land use rights, covering up to 90 percent of land in some areas, are being transferred away from local farmers to state-run cooperatives, forcing the local population into wage labor through coercive labor transfers.” Forced labor transfer to other provinces does not serve the purpose of boosting the latter’s economy with slave labor only. In the South of the region, “labor transfers are part of state efforts to ‘optimize’ (i.e. reduce) the Uyghur population ratio in southern Xinjiang, in order to ‘end the dominance of the Uyghur ethnic group’ in their own homeland.” These policies, the report says, “continued through early 2024,” and there are plans to increase the quotas this year and in 2025.

“In short, coercive labor mobilization continues unabated.” “Uyghur forced labor is becoming both more prevalent and more insidious.” What the West can do is ask its own companies, guided by the recent Volkswagen scandals, not to employ Uyghur slave labors, and sanction those that do.

[Red China Isn't 'Back' Under Xi Jinping. It Never Went Away](#)  
26 February 2024, [Time](#)

About a year ago, former Prime Minister of Australia and sinologist Kevin Rudd wrote that

Red China is “back.” If only Beijing could come to its senses and return to the policy of “Reform and Opening Up” it pursued so successfully for 40 years, he argued. But Rudd, like many others, has based a pious hope on a faulty analysis, one which goes as follows: Deng Xiaoping and his followers abandoned Marxism the moment Mao Zedong died in 1976 to transform an insulated country reeling from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution into the world's second-largest economy.

The key term is obviously “reform.” For decades, a motley crew of foreign politicians, entrepreneurs, and experts have told us that “Reform and Opening Up” meant a move from the planned economy to a capitalist one. And in the wake of economic reform, they have assured us that political reform would inevitably follow, turning China into a responsible stakeholder if not a thriving democracy. There were major economic reforms but the political shift never happened. None of these fortune-tellers had bothered to genuinely read the country's constitution, listen to its leaders, or understand its past.

One common view is that since every one of China's leaders after Mao was a victim of the Cultural Revolution (Deng was purged three times; Xi Jinping was sent into exile in the countryside at the age of 15), they understood all too well the danger of power wielded by a capricious hand. But the opposite is true. After Mao launched the Cultural Revolution in the summer of 1966, he first allowed select students called Red Guards, then the population at large, to ferret out and denounce every party member who might have harbored misgivings about his leadership and the revolution at large. “Bombard the Headquarters,” he urged his followers. The result was a social explosion on an unprecedented scale. Party officials recoiled in horror, many of them hauled to denunciation meetings, paraded through the streets, demeaned, tortured, occasionally locked up and the key thrown away. Mao used the people to purge the party of real and suspected

enemies, but then in 1968 used the army to purge the people in turn, making sure no one was left standing to challenge him. After his death, the leadership was determined never to allow ordinary people to criticize the party again.

Deng, who had long warned against “bourgeois liberalization,” codified that approach in 1982 with the Four Cardinal Principles in the constitution. These four principles boil down to two core values: keep to the socialist road, and uphold the leadership of the party, or, in two words, Marxism-Leninism. The Four Cardinal Principles have been regularly invoked by every leader to this very day.

Although Deng wanted his country to “Open Up,” by which he meant that foreign capital and technology should be welcomed, he regularly launched campaigns against “spiritual pollution” from abroad. It was not merely an old man railing against long hair, jeans, and pop songs. Like Mao, Deng was all too well aware of the concept of “peaceful evolution,” first formulated in 1957 by John Foster Dulles. The Secretary of State proposed that the U.S. and its allies use peaceful means, including loans, commerce, and the arts, to accelerate the transition toward democracy of countries in the Soviet orbit, thereby shortening the life span of communism. This is precisely what happened in Poland as people voted themselves out of communism on June 4, 1989, the very same day Deng sent 200 tanks and some 100,000 soldiers to grind the democracy movement into the dust at Tiananmen Square.

Even before the Soviet Union disintegrated a few years later, Jiang Zemin, Deng's chosen successor, placed the party on high alert against efforts by the “capitalist camp” to infiltrate and undermine the party through “the plot of peaceful evolution.” The alleged conspiracy remains, to this day, the Chinese regime's greatest fear, feeding paranoia and ill-will in a country that has arguably benefited from more good-will than any other in the world. Everything, from stamping out Mickey Mouse under Jiang and Winnie the Pooh under

Xi is seen as a devious plan to bring down the communist party. Every time a Bill Clinton or a George Bush suggested in Beijing that with economic reform, political change was not far on the horizon, they were providing the leadership with all the evidence it needed to confirm their view that sinister foreign powers were trying to overthrow the Chinese government.

Even the economic reforms are overstated. Mao wreaked havoc on the economy with the Cultural Revolution. It had to be rebuilt over decades. But in a one-party state, politics is always in command. The vision pursued by the regime was to invigorate the socialist economy, not to completely abandon it. The radical collectivization of the past was left behind, but the Marxist principle of state ownership over the means of production, including land, capital, labour, energy and raw materials, was largely maintained. When, in 1992, Deng proposed leasing land to attract more foreign investment, he called it “Capitalist Tools in Socialist Hands”: why fear the capitalist dollar when the state controlled everything? After 2000, Jiang made sure powerful party committees were set up even in private enterprises, making the distinction between private and public ownership all but meaningless. Control over the means of production is precisely what has allowed China to provide chosen enterprises with endless subsidies and a seemingly inexhaustible line of cheap credit. That has made sure that no country could compete the moment access to the World Trade Organization was granted in 2001.

In 1987, China's then-Premier Zhao Ziyang met the 75-year-old Erich Honecker in Berlin. The party leader of East Germany expressed his earnest concern over the nature of China's “Reform and Opening Up.” Zhao explained that the policy was temporary only: in the future, once its living standards had been raised, the population would acknowledge the superiority of socialism, at which point the “scope for liberalization will be reduced further and further.” A few months later, at the Party

Congress in Beijing, he explained that “we will never copy the separation of powers and the multi-party system of the West.” It was an uncanny prediction. East Germany has long since vanished, but Red China never went away.

How does India's military measure up against China and Pakistan?

23 February 2024, [FirstPost](#)

*Global Firepower in its 2024 index put India's military in fourth place and China's at third on its top ten list. Pakistan, meanwhile, was at number 9. Indian Army chief Manoj Pande has said the army is ready and capable of dealing with 'any situation' along the border*

India and China this week held yet another round of high-level military talks over the border row in Eastern Ladakh.

While there was no breakthrough in the 21st round of talks at the Chushul-Moldo border point, both sides did agree to maintain 'peace and tranquillity.'

Meanwhile, defence secretary Giridhar Aramane on Wednesday said India is standing up to a 'bully' in a very “determined fashion.” “India is giving a face off to our neighbour in almost all the fronts we have with them, wherever there is a mountain pass, we are stationed there... and wherever there is a road we have to be there. So that way we are there standing against a bully in a very determined fashion,” he said.

Indian Army Chief General Manoj Pande last month called the situation along the LAC in eastern Ladakh is “stable” but “sensitive.”

He said Indian troops are maintaining a “very high state” of operational preparedness to effectively deal with any eventualities.

But how strong is the Indian military? How does it measure up against China and its traditional rival Pakistan?

**Let's take a closer look:**

### **The Global Firepower Index**

The Global Firepower, which rates the world's nations on military strength, in January released its 2024 index.

The company uses over 60 factors including military equipment, financial stability, geographic location and resources to determine a country's 'Power Index' score.

It assigns a value to a country's military firepower.

The firm says that while its perfect score of 0.000 is unattainable, the smaller the value assigned to a country the more powerful is its ability to fight a conventional war.

“Our formula allows for smaller, more technologically-advanced, nations to compete with larger, lesser-developed powers and special modifiers, in the form of bonuses and penalties, are applied to further refine the list which is compiled annually,” the firm states on its website.

So how did the India, China and Pakistan fare? The Global Firepower Ranks Index 2024 put India in fourth place on its top ten list with a value of 0.1023

China, meanwhile, placed one spot ahead of India at rank three with a value of 0.0706.

Pakistan was at number nine at a value of 0.1711.

The top two countries on the list are the United States and Russia with values of 0.0699 and 0.0702 respectively.

Bhutan was dead last with an assigned value of 6.3704.

### **Manpower**

Now, let's examine the armed forces of all three nations – beginning with the manpower China can call upon 2,035,000 active personnel, while India has 144,55,550 active duty personnel.

Pakistan, meanwhile, has just 600,000 personnel.

China has just 510,000 reserves, while India has 1,155,000 reserves.

Pakistan, interestingly has 550,000 reserves – more than China.

It is important to note that China and India are the top two most populated nations in the world with 1.4 and 1.2 billion people respectively.

Pakistan, by comparison, has around 250 million.

So naturally, China and India have a larger population to draw from.

When it comes to the paramilitary, India is ahead with 2,527,000 troops.

China has just 625,000 paramilitary personnel, while Pakistan has 500,000 paramilitary troops. India has, of course fought wars, with both China and Pakistan.

The India-China border conflict erupted on 5 May, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong lake area.

The ties between the two countries nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades.

But army chief Pande has signalled that India is prepared for anything.

“The army is ready and capable of dealing with any situation along the northern borders (with China). We have taken several concrete measures to develop our capabilities in those areas,” Pande said.

#### **Budget**

When it comes to the money spent on defence, China is ahead with a budget of \$224 billion. India, meanwhile, has a budget of \$73.8 billion. Of course, even China’s declared budget must be taken with a pinch of salt.

*The Times of India* quoted Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) as reckoning China’s military budget was four times more than the figures they gave out in 2002.

The US Department of Defence thinks its real military budget might be around 1.1 to 2 times more than what it gives out in its official reports.

Pakistan, by comparison, has a paltry defence budget of \$6.34 billion.

#### **Air Force**

When it comes to the air forces of all three nations, it is again China that comes out on top. Beijing has 3,304 aircraft, while India and Pakistan have 2,296 aircraft and 1,434 aircraft respectively.

It is to be noted that while India is attempting to beef up its air force and phase out aging

crafts, deliveries of fighter jets and other equipment takes time.

#### **Tanks**

China has 5,000 tanks, while India is not far behind with 4,614 tanks.

Pakistan has only 3,742 tanks.

China has 174,300 armoured vehicles, while India has 1,51,248 armoured vehicles.

Pakistan lags far behind here with just 50,523 armoured vehicles.

China leads the pack when it comes to self-propelled artillery with 3,850 systems.

Pakistan, surprisingly, has 752 such systems while India has just 140 systems.

This is even more surprising given India’s history when Bofors guns played a vital role in winning India the Kargil war.

#### **Naval power**

When it comes to the naval power, it is China that emerges on top yet again.

While China has 730 vessels in its fleet, India has 294 vessels.

Pakistan has just 114 vessels.

China and India both have two aircraft carriers each – the INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant for India – while Pakistan has zero aircraft carriers. Interestingly, China until recently was considered a ‘Green-water Navy’ – that is one that had operational capabilities limited to its own region.

However, China has since built the world’s largest fleet and has other countries including Australia the United States – which is a ‘Blue-water Navy’ – worried about Beijing’s expansionist ambitions.

*CNN* quoted FDD senior fellow Craig Singleton as saying, “It’s a question of when – not if – China will secure its next overseas military outpost,” he said.

This comes in the backdrop of China’s continued threats to force a reunification with Taiwan – which Xi Jinping has described as ‘inevitable’.

But defence minister Rajnath Singh in February sounded a warning.

Rajnath said that India is maintaining a sustained presence in the strategic waters to ensure safety and security of all cargo vessels

and it will not shrink from countering any threat that undermines collective well-being of the region.

“It is our steadfast resolve to be the first responder and the preferred security partner in the Indian Ocean Region, and for the peace, stability and prosperity of the wider Indo-Pacific,” he added.

Singh said India will continue to play the role of a ‘Vishwa Mitra’ (friend of the world) in forging meaningful partnerships with an aim to make the world a truly “connected and equitable habitat”.

Claude Arpi | China playing new border games close to Mt Kailash

23 February 2024, [Deccan Chronicle](#)

Western Tibet has a rich historical background, particularly in proximity to Mount Kailash, near the trijunction between India, Nepal and Tibet. It is the case of Purang/Taklakot and a place called Toyo, located a few kilometres away, which have gone down in history for the epic battle between the Dogras of Gen. Zorawar Singh and the Tibetans troops. In December 1841, the Dogra troops, who had just conquered Western Tibet (known as Ngari), were defeated by the Tibetans -- and also by the winter.

The great Tibetan historian, Tsepon Shakabpa, thus described the battle of Taklakot/Toyo: “The Tibetan government quickly dispatched Ü Dapön [Gen.] Shedra Wangchuk Gyelpo and the Ü Tsang [Central Tibet] militia under the leadership of Cabinet minister Pellhün; when they arrived in Ngari, one regiment of the foreign army [the Dogras] was stationed at Rutok [near Pangong-tso], another was at Trashigang [near Demchok on the Ladakh border], and a third was at Rupshö [in Ladakh]. Secret preparations were made for the Tibetan troops to confront each [Dogra] unit. Zorawar Singh and the most seasoned [Dogra] troops, who were stationed at Taklakhar [Taklakot] Castle [in fact in Toyo] were confronted... In the eleventh month [December 1841], during the coldest weather of the year, the Tibetan troops attacked from all directions simultaneously.”

The fate of Zorawar Singh and his troops were sealed, according to Shakabpa: “Three days after the fighting began, heavy snow fell. Thus, the Sikh troops who were at Taklakot became frozen solid. Trembling under their difficulties, the Sikhs were attacked by the Tibetans in terrible hand-to-hand fighting... While Zorawar Singh was riding his horse, rushing back and forth, he was recognized by a Yasor called Mikmar. He threw a spear and Zorawar Singh fell from his horse. Leaping off of his own horse, Mikmar cut Singh’s head off and carried it into the middle of the Tibetan camp. This was seen by the Sikh [Dogra] soldiers, and they fled in whatever way they could.”

A few months later, Maharaja Gulab Singh smashed the Tibetan forces trying to invade Ladakh. Dapön Zurkhang and Dapön Pelzhi were captured and taken to Leh, where a peace treaty was signed between the Dogras and the Tibetans, confirming once more the traditional border between Ladakh and Tibet. The tomb of Zorawar Singh still exists in Toyo, which has recently come in the news, but for different reasons.

An article in the Chinese media mentions a newly-built village in Toyo: “China continues to promote the improvement of the rural living environment, paying close attention to greening [the area], beautification and [water] purification; the changes in Toyo are a concrete manifestation of the Ngari region’s efforts to build a beautiful and livable countryside.” During the past three years, in Western Tibet alone, a total of 31 projects have been implemented to build liveable, “industrial” and beautiful villages, a local Communist Party cadre explains; in his jargon that it will be: “in accordance with the principles of beautiful leisure villages, happy and liveable villages, clean and tidy villages.” But why a new village in Toyo? Says Newsweek: “China appears to have completed the construction of a new dam in the country’s southwestern border regions, a project that could have far-reaching strategic implications for its southern neighbours India and Nepal.” Built on the Mapcha Tsangpo (or Peacock river, also known as Ghaghara or Saryu



in India and Karnali in Nepal), it is a perennial source of fresh water supply to the downstream populations. What is strange is that the existence of this hydropower plant, located close to the Indian border, has not appeared in any published Chinese plan earlier. Though satellite imagery only shows a medium river-of-the-river dam, without a large reservoir, India downstream should be concerned. But there is more. A new airport is coming up a couple of kilometres north of the hydropower plant and the “model” village. In June 2018, the Civil Aviation Administration of China had announced that Tibet would soon have three new airports. The Chinese-language press had given some information about the location of these three airports: one was to be located in Lhuntse, north of Arunachal Pradesh, the second was north of a border post with Nepal and the last in Purang. Chinese website seetao.com explained: “These three airports can be used for civilian use in peacetime, military aircraft training on the plateau; direct military use in wartime, holding military operations, will be able to play a very important role.” Though many in India had forgotten about this announcement, the airport is now functional; on November 10, 2023, videos of the newly-built airfield appeared on the Chinese social media. These three developments (model village, hydropower station and airport) should be seen as one, undoubtedly all are for dual (civil and military) use. A separate occurrence needs to be noticed: the closure of the Kailash Yatra to Indian pilgrims. The 6,638-metre-tall diamond-shaped mountain is considered to be the abode of Lord Shiva and also one of the most sacred places in the Jain, Buddhist and Bon religions. For centuries, pilgrims from India have visited the holy site; since the 1990s, they could cross into Tibet via Lipulekh Pass in Pithoragarh district and later enter Tibet via Nathu-la in Sikkim. After the Doklam incident in 2017, the Indian yatrias were not allowed to use these routes anymore. As Beijing ignored Kathmandu’s request to permit the aerial sightseeing of Mount Kailash, Nepali tour

operators decided to offer the yatrias an alternative and a large number of devotees started using the Nepal route from Simikot to Purang by chartered helicopters; unfortunately, the scheme was subsequently closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. After the scheme reopened for Nepalis in 2022, the Chinese authorities did not allow Indian visitors to fly to Purang, though last year alone, Nepali tour operators received over 50,000 bookings from Indian pilgrims for the sacred pilgrimage. According to the Kathmandu Post, a new alternative has been found: a flight could remain in Nepalese territory and have a “remote” darshan of the sacred mountain: “Shree Airlines operated a first-of-its-kind aerial pilgrimage tour of the holy places, making the pilgrims’ dream come true without a Chinese visa” -- explained a communiqué last week. It is clear that China does not want Indians to have a real darshan of the holy mountain, or even come close to the place where Zorawar Singh is buried; and these latest developments in the area explain why.

Tibet border closure hits family reunions, local trade  
23 February 2024, [The Kathmandu Post](#)

According to Chheta Sherpa Lama, Nepali side tried their best to reopen the border, but to no avail.

Temba and his wife Paten Sherpa, permanent residents of Olangchungola in ward 7 of Phaktanglung Rural Municipality, live in an animal shed near Sinjema lake. They raise yaks in the highlands and also provide food and accommodation for visitors. They have three children who study in Phungling, the district headquarters of Taplejung, and in Kathmandu. The Sherpa couple has been tending to animals in the isolated pasture, situated around 47,700 metres above sea level, just a few hours walk from the nearest human settlement. Their shed is close to the Tiptala Bhanjyang, near the Nepal-China border in Taplejung. There is Riu settlement of Dinggye County of Tibet, an autonomous region of China, just across the border. Riu, which is 35 km from the Nepal-

China border, is Paten's maternal home. While it takes around five hours on foot to reach the Nepal-China border from Sherpa's shed, by bus it takes one hour. "But I have not been able to visit my maternal home for the past four years. The way to my maternal village is inaccessible as the Nepal-China border remains closed for a long time," complained Paten.

The Chinese government closed Tiptala Bhanjyang border point amid a coronavirus threat in January, 2020. Due to the protracted border closure, hundreds of locals in the northern villages of Taplejung have been unable to meet their relatives in Tibet for four years now.

Bhujung and Bhomo Sherpa of Mauwatar in Olangchungola have a similar ordeal like that of Temba and Paten. Bhomo, who was born in Tibet, married Bhujung of Bhotkhola Rural Municipality in Sankhuwasabha district. The couple later migrated to Mauwatar and began rearing yaks. They are happy with the income they earn from rearing animals, which supports their livelihood and three children's education. However, Bhomo has one complaint—the border has become a barrier preventing her from meeting her parents in Tibet.

Temba and Bhujung would frequently visit Tibetan markets for trade, transporting various goods on yaks. During their visits, they formed connections with Tibetan girls, whom they eventually brought back as life partners. "We never imagined that the border would close some day leaving us unable to visit our relatives," said Bhujung.

The Chinese authorities installed a telephone repeater tower near the Nepal-China border. But it is not useful for the Nepali side. Nepalis living near the border have to trek down to Olangchungola to make a phone call. Although there is a 2G network of Nepal Telecom in Olangchungola, it does not support online communication platforms like WhatsApp and Viber.

"We have to walk for five to seven hours just to make a phone call to my maternal relatives in Riu. It would take me less time to reach my maternal home than to get to Olangchungola.

But the closed border is a barrier in my way," said Paten, who is in her mid-forties.

Tsering Kipa, who has been living in Olangchungola with her husband Dandu Sherpa, is in her early seventies. She has a strong desire to reunite with her maternal family in Tibet. Her husband Dandu also shares her longing and wants to support her. But their wish to visit their relatives in Tibet will remain unfulfilled unless the Chinese authorities reopen the border.

According to Chheten Sherpa Lama, ward chairman of ward 7 of Phaktalung Rural Municipality, there are at least 18 women in Olangchungola and Yangma settlements who have their maternal homes in Tibet. He said that many Tibetan women married to Nepali men from Ghunsa, Phale, Mikkakhola among other settlements as well.

Chheten claimed Nepali side tried their best to reopen the border, but to no avail. According to him, the chief of Dinggye County telephoned him in September last year and informed that the border would reopen soon. Accordingly, the then chief district officer of Taplejung Goma Devi Chemjong distributed border identity cards to the people living in northern villages bordering Tibet.

"We have discussions with the representatives of the county. They tell us that the border will reopen once they get permission from the centre (Beijing). The government of Nepal should talk to the central government of China," said Chheten.

Trans-border trade and animal husbandry have been hugely affected by the border closure. People living near the Nepal-China border rely on Tibet for their daily essential commodities, as the area has yet to be connected to the national road network. Tibet also serves as a major market for them to sell a variety of products including medicinal herbs and domesticated animals.

Feature story: [Is the migration of exile Tibetans to the west a boon or bane?](#)

23 February 2024, [Phayul](#)

The Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959 forced approximately 80,000 Tibetans to seek refuge in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. Decades later, a demographic survey conducted by the Tibetan government in exile known officially as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in 2009 reported a Tibetan exile population of 1,28,014; 94,203 in India, 13,514 in Nepal, 1,298 in Bhutan, and 18,999 elsewhere. Over the past decade, this geographic distribution of the Tibetan diaspora has undergone significant changes. In 2020, a study conducted by the 15th Kashag titled “Baseline Study of the Tibetan Diaspora Community Outside South Asia” indicated that approximately half of the Tibetan population now resides outside the traditional exile communities in South East Asia, with 36,098 in North America and 26,379 in Europe, Australasia, and Far East Asia. In the subsequent four years, these numbers are likely to have increased in the population of Tibetans outside South East Asia.

In recent years, a noticeable increase in migration has been observed, especially among youths and middle-aged Tibetans. The primary driver of this trend is financial stability and employment opportunities, compelling many of them to resettle in the West as a significant portion of Tibetan households are engaged in traditional agriculture or seasonal sweater business. With only a small percentage involved in individual businesses or unregistered units, many Tibetan youths migrate in search of better employment opportunities.

The incumbent President Penpa Tsering, during his 2023 speech in Minnesota, openly acknowledged the diminishing presence of youths in Tibetan settlements in India. He stated, “It is the fault of the Tibetan government in exile that we cannot provide the youth jobs that fit their education qualifications in the settlements,” attributing the migration to the inability to offer suitable employment. Consequently, the diminishing youth population in settlements has set off a chain reaction, resulting in a decrease in the number of children.”

It is worth noting that the CTA has played a pivotal role in facilitating the migration of Tibetans to Western countries. While assigning blame can be complex and multifaceted, many argue that the CTA bears partial responsibility for the challenges faced due to the decline in the Tibetan population in the Indian subcontinent.

#### ***State-sponsored schemes***

The decades in exile saw a significant challenge in terms of livelihood and rehabilitation for the Tibetans with chunk of the community still receiving fresh batches of Tibetans refugees. Between 1989 to until early 2000s, Tibetan refugees under a relatively relaxed border continued to flock into India with an average of 3000-4000 Tibetans every year.

This influx bolstered the number of Tibetans in the refugee settlements, schools as well as monastic institutions, that fostered the preservation of Tibet’s unique culture and religion.

While this increased the number of the diaspora community, challenges emerged as to the standard of living, livelihood challenges and the overall economic condition of the Tibetans in exile. With those conditions in play, the exile Tibetan government sought every help including foreign aid to make the lives of Tibetans better. Beginning in the early 1960’s the exile government sent batches of Tibetans to the west under humanitarian schemes sponsored by foreign countries.

The history of migration from India to the West began in the early 1960s after Tibetans resettled in South Asian countries. In 1963 the Swiss government welcomed 1,000 Tibetan refugees, marking the country’s first non-European refugees. Today, more than 8,000 Tibetans are living in Switzerland. In 1971, the Tibetan Refugee Program led to the resettlement of 228 in Canada. In 1972, nearly a thousand Tibetans settled in Dee Why, Sydney, Australia, especially former Tibetan political prisoners and their families. This trend continues today, with several Tibetan political prisoners and their families resettling in Australia. In 1990, 1,000 Tibetan refugees from

India immigrated to the U.S. under the resettlement program. The latest mass migration was in 2013, resettling 1,000 Tibetan refugees to Canada. According to the findings of Francoise Robin, a Tibet specialist at France's National Institute of Eastern Languages and Civilisation, approximately 8,000 Tibetans currently reside in the country.

The Tibetan Demographic Survey of 2009 estimated that over 9,309 individuals moved to the West during the period 1998-2009. By 2024, nearly half of the Tibetans in exile reside in foreign countries, highlighting the continuous flow of Tibetans seeking refuge and opportunities abroad. The number of exile Tibetans who have migrated to the west through these schemes have doubled or more as immediate families and relatives of these state sponsored schemes have also moved to the west through family reunion visas as well as spouse visas.

#### ***Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy 2014***

The Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (TRP) 2014, formalised by the Government of India on October 20, 2014, in consultation with the Tibetan government in exile, to address issues related to the land occupied by Tibetans in various settlements across India, due to the absence of proper land lease document. The policy states that state governments should sign a lease document for the land occupied by Tibetan refugees. This lease is to be granted for a period of 20 years, or until it is revoked or cancelled. This provision offers a level of security and tenure to Tibetan refugees who may have been occupying land without formal documentation. Other key aspects of the TRP 2014 are the extension of various state and central government schemes and provisions, as well as improvements in infrastructure facilities within Tibetan settlements.

One of the policy's emphasis was on the formalisation of land lease agreements, granting land use rights to Tibetans, and extending central and state benefits for various development schemes. A research paper authored by Tenzin Choedon titled 'Rehabilitation or a Temporal

Adjustment: An Assessment of the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy, 2014' however, argues that the policy's primary concentration on resolving land-related issues resulted in relatively less attention being given to the implementation of other developmental schemes.

Contrary to the expectations of the CTA, only five states in India, namely Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim, have adopted the Tibetan Rehabilitation Policy (TRP) 2014. Speaking to Phayul, Choedon said, "The limited adoption of the TRP 2014 in only five states in India can be attributed to various factors, and resistance may indeed exist in states that did not adopt it. There isn't a singular factor that could explain the reluctance of some states to adopt the policy; each state has its unique political, economic, and social dynamics that must be considered. For instance, examining the relationship between local residents and Tibetans in a specific state is crucial. The dynamics of the relationship between Dharamshala locals and Tibetans may differ significantly from that between Tibetans and local residents in Uttarakhand."

The provisions outlined in the policy have faced criticism for their perceived lack of clear deliverables, both in written documentation and practical implementation. Notably, the policy fails to address the challenges faced by Tibetans regarding property ownership or leasing in their names. Additionally, it does not provide any guidance or mention government job opportunities for the Tibetan community. Perhaps most crucially, the policy does not offer clarity on the legal status of Tibetans under the Indian constitution, leaving their legal standing uncertain. This lack of clarity on the legal status of Tibetan refugees, persisting for more than sixty years in exile, coupled with the challenges faced by Tibetans in their daily lives that are significantly influenced by their legal identity, stands out as a major factor contributing to the mass migration of Tibetans to the West. The uncertainty surrounding their legal standing has likely played a pivotal role in

shaping the decisions of many Tibetan refugees to seek better opportunities and stability in Western countries.

The implementation of the TRP 2014 has given rise to questions, whether it genuinely serves as a 'rehabilitation policy' for Tibetans in India or is it intended more as a preventive measure, considering its consultation with the CTA, particularly in issues like the migration of Tibetans to the West. "The adoption of the policy is the result of a mutual agreement between the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), aimed at resolving the persistent land disputes among Tibetan settlements with various institutional bodies and their local residents. Furthermore, the policy aims to consolidate Tibetans in these settlements by providing them access to various schemes while securing the "temporariness" of the exile community. In the past decade, there has been a significant increase in the population migrating abroad or to urban areas, coupled with a decline in childbirth. This demographic shift raises concerns within the CTA regarding its primary goal of protecting Tibetans and preserving their culture in exile. Therefore, the TRP is framed not only as a means of rehabilitation but also as a preventive measure to address the challenges posed by the migration of Tibetans, particularly to the West," Choedon opined.

#### ***Impact on the institutions***

The migration trend of Tibetans from South Asian countries to others has presented multifaceted challenges for the Tibetan government in exile, impacting the sustenance of educational institutions, Tibetan settlements, and overall sustenance of the government itself.

The migration of Tibetans has had a substantial impact on Tibetan schools in exile, as highlighted by Sikyong in his May speech in Shimla. The data from the Department of Education indicated a significant decline in the number of Tibetan students over the years. In 2012, there were reportedly over 20,000 Tibetan students, but by 2022, this number had diminished to 9,700.

The Sikyong identified several factors contributing to this decline. Firstly, there has been a decrease in the arrival of Tibetan children from inside Tibet. Secondly, the migration of Tibetan youths to Western countries emerged as a significant factor impacting the student population. Finally, a low birth rate within the Tibetan community was identified as the third reason for the diminishing student numbers.

President Penpa Tsering, in his address at the 16th Annual School Heads' Meeting of Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (STSS) in Dharamshala in January 2024, disclosed the number of monasteries under CTA to be 292 monasteries. The total monastic population residing in these monastic institutions stands at approximately 39,000. Notably, only 29% of these monks are of Tibetan descent. The majority, comprising 69.5% hail from the Himalayan region, while the remaining 1.5% are from Mongolia and various other countries. The number of Tibetans enrolling in monasteries have reduced multifold over the years.

While the decline in schools and monasteries cannot be attributed only to migration to the west, it is arguably a major factor.

Geshe Lhakdor, the Director of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA), in his speech at Manjushri, a Dharamshala-based organisation in January 2024, highlighted the growing trend of migration of Tibetan youth to the West, pointing out how it poses a threat to the preservation of the Tibetan language and culture. Additionally, he noted that Tibetan children in the West have fewer resources available to them for learning the Tibetan language and culture. This, he said, could potentially impact the continuity and depth of Tibetan cultural and linguistic traditions among the younger generation in the diaspora.

In India, compact communities have appeared to be a medium to reinvigorate Tibetan identity, primarily through schools, monastic institutions, and cultural centers. Recognizing this significance, a major initiative has been undertaken by the 16th Kashag (Cabinet)



known as the 'Building Back Compact Communities' (BBCC) program. The BBCC program reflects a commitment to address the challenges posed by the dispersal of Tibetan communities. The initiative is likely to focus on rebuilding, strengthening, and revitalising the core elements that contribute to the cohesiveness of compact communities, including efforts to enhance educational institutions, preserve cultural heritage, and sustain monastic traditions.

### ***A new frontiers***

The mass migration of Tibetans from India to foreign countries has catalyzed the emergence of a global Tibetan diaspora, scattered across different nations. This dispersion has given rise to a network of impassioned individuals committed to advocating for the rights and freedom of Tibetans. These diaspora communities have evolved into focal points for organizing advocacy efforts and elevating awareness about the Tibetan cause. The migration has additionally empowered Tibetans to participate in political activism and lobbying endeavors in foreign nations, enabling them to influence policies both locally and nationally in support of their cause. This active involvement in politics further contributes to garnering political backing for the Tibetan cause on the international stage.

Chemi Lhamo, a Tibetan-Canadian human rights activist and Campaigns Director at Students for Free Tibet, told Phayul, "Migration of Tibetans to foreign countries provides a unique opportunity for the next generation of Tibetan advocacy as more Tibetans will bear hyphenated identities in the ever-changing political world. The advocacy work done in respective nations as a Tibetan vs. a Tibetan citizen of the respective country is drastically different with various access to spaces such as a meeting with your member of parliament (MP) as a constituent vs a meeting request for a conflict on the other side of the world".

In the global context, Lhamo sees the potential for Tibetans equipped with knowledge of their host nations and accepted degrees to bring Tibet to the international stage through diverse

avenues. However, she underscores the need for balancing this promising network and opportunity with the preservation of the Tibetan identity, maintaining relationships with the current host nation, India, and ensuring the continued engagement of youth in the Tibetan freedom movement.

When asked about changes in the dynamics of Tibetan advocacy due to resettlement in various foreign countries, Lhamo cites a tangible example. "During the last China's UPR, 9 states mentioned Tibet and this year last week in Geneva, 21 states mentioned Tibet and made 24 recommendations. This is one example that is a direct result of Tibetans resettling in various foreign countries and lobbying their respective governments, taking up space in the international world and representing Tibet". Lhamo also envisions a turning point, where Tibetan activists are not solely advocates for Tibet but are increasingly recognized as leaders in broader global movements, including the environmental movement and the fight for democracy against authoritarianism. Lobby days and activism by Tibetan youth, including those born in the west have significantly increased the vigor and bite of both activism and advocacy abroad, the exploits of which the CTA relies and bets on.

Delving into a more practical level, financial and living standards of Tibetans in the West and their families in the Indian subcontinent, have improved over the years due to migration. Thousands of Tibetans have migrated from South East Asia to other countries in search of employment and financial stability. Tamding Dolma, a naturalized French citizen who migrated to France from India a decade ago, shared that her decision to move was primarily driven by her family's financial difficulties and lack of employment opportunities in India. When questioned about the financial support she provides to her family in India, she explained that her migration to France was instrumental in alleviating the financial constraints her family faced. Subsequently, both her brother and sister also migrated to France.

Tamding told Phayul that over the past decade she and her siblings have been successful in stabilizing the financial condition of their family in India. Despite inherent challenges of moving to and adjusting in a foreign country, she believes that the decision to migrate has proven to be financially beneficial not only for them but also for others in similar situations.

Migration has contributed to the dissemination of Tibetan culture and religion globally. Tibetan Buddhism, once confined to the Himalayas, has now spread worldwide, with Tibetan Buddhist monks and prayer flags becoming common sights. Emily Yeh's research on the *'Tibetan Diaspora in the US'* suggests that the emigration of Tibetans in recent decades has played a crucial role in popularizing Tibetan Buddhism globally.

#### **Legitimacy of the CTA**

The migration of Tibetans to the West perhaps most significantly poses threats to the legitimacy of the Tibetan government in exile based in Dharamshala. The diminishing population of the Tibetan community in India has the potential to reshape the demographic makeup of compact Tibetan communities, specifically influencing the leadership and administrative capacities of the CTA.

The subject of migration was touted to be a challenge by majority of the Sikyong candidates during the campaign of the last general election of CTA in 2021. Key presidential candidates including the incumbent Sikyong Penpa Tsering highlighted the issue of migration on their campaign trail. With the demographic distribution of exile Tibetans nearing half in the Indian subcontinent and the other half in the west, the question of CTA's legitimacy, at least in the few decades, many say, will come into question. The CTA has significant jurisdiction and clout in CTA administered settlements and schools in India only and not in the west. While the Tibetans in the west have a deep affinity with the CTA and its leadership, the absence of physical spaces and improper administration channels in the west has undermined the CTA's reach in the west.

The CTA faces challenges in administering scattered Tibetan communities in countries in the West, as it lacks jurisdiction similar to its role in India. This circumstance raises administrative issues, as highlighted by challenges encountered during the latest demographic survey conducted in 2022 by the present administration under the leadership of President Penpa Tsering. The survey was deemed "inconclusive" and "unsuccessful." "We have received around 66,000 forms from the India-Nepal- Bhutan population census. However, we are yet to receive numbers from some schools and also yet to consider the number of men enrolled in the army," the Additional Secretary from the Department of Home, Dawa Tsultrim told Phayul earlier. Notably, the survey identified a gap of 4,000 forms during online filing. A spokesperson acknowledged this discrepancy, stating, "We are currently looking to solve this discrepancy in the number of forms we have received. But perhaps Tibetans from the West could have submitted forms through their respective settlements but since their Green Book is listed abroad, it could have complicated their entries."

The development is a stark reminder that CTA's jurisdiction and clout faces a number of problems particularly when the target demographic is spread sparsely in western countries.

The bigger challenge, however, is the decreasing number of Tibetans in CTA administered refugee settlements, schools and monasteries in India where, observers feel that in the next one or two decades, the problem could exponentially become evident with CTA's legitimacy coming into question with the number of Tibetans.

In an interview with Phayul, Sikyong Penpa Tsering acknowledged the rapid increase in Tibetan migration, expressing an understanding that this trend is likely to continue over time. He elaborated on his recent official visit to France and other countries, highlighting his engagement with Tibetans in these regions. Sikyong Penpa

Tsering emphasised his commitment, as outlined in his campaign manifesto, to bridge the emotional gap arising from the physical distance among Tibetan communities.

Addressing this concern, Sikyong Penpa Tsering told Phayul that adapting to new realities is crucial to maintaining legitimacy. “The idea is that if Tibetans in the West can sustain themselves, it might be beneficial to allow them to grow independently, especially when continuous financial support might become unsustainable over time. The sustainability of various initiatives, such as weekend Tibetan classes is an effort made by Tibetan associations and individuals in the West. They are managing well with support from the Department of Education, textbooks, and their own endeavours. This emphasis is on fostering a mindset that allows these initiatives to grow organically, minimising reliance on external assistance,” he said.

“The evolving demographic and social changes within the Tibetan diaspora highlights the importance of legislators and leadership actively listening to the voices of the people, considering the significant demographic shifts and social transformations. There is a growing need to adapt representation structures to align with the aspirations and needs of the community,” he told Phayul.

[A Indian Army Prepares For A Tough Summer On China Border—OpEd](#)

22 February 2024, [Eurasia Review](#)

The Indian Army says it is preparing in full earnest to counter anticipated Chinese incursions and “other forms of aggression” along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) that intelligence reports have indicated as likely to take place in the summer of 2024 on or before the Indian parliament polls.

Senior military intelligence officials told Eurasia Review that Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande has decided to “combatise” its Central Command, which so far largely provided reserves for the frontline fighting formations in the Western, Northern and Eastern commands.

In US, he was provided with detailed and quality technical-signal intelligence and satellite feeds on Chinese military movements in Tibet and neighbouring provinces, they said.

On Wednesday, Indian defence secretary Giridhar Aramane described China as a “bully” and thanked the US for support to face up to its northern neighbour.

Speaking at the Indus-X summit, Aramane did not rule out “a recurrence of the May 2020 situation” (when Indian and Chinese forces suffered casualties in violent clashes on the Ladakh border) and said US support was critical for India in such a situation.

“One thing which helped us very quickly is the intelligence, the situational awareness which the US equipment and the US government helped us with,” Aramane said. “So that is one single most important area.”

The defence secretary said the strong resolve that both India and the US support each other in the face of a common threat is going to be of much importance.

Military sources said the Indian army is raising a new Corps under the Central Command for deployment in the Central sector of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China that falls between Ladakh (under 14 Corps) and Siliguri corridor (under 33 Corps).

This corps will now have its own additional artillery, aviation and engineer brigades along with other elements. So far the Central Command was largely an administrative Command.

The military officials said that Headquarters Uttar Bharat (HQ UB), the administrative formation under the Central Command, is being converted into a full-fledged corps called the 18 Corps with one division and three independent brigades under it to take care of that part of the LAC, which falls between the Leh-based 14 Corps, under the Northern Command, and North Bengal’s Sukna-based 33 Corps, under the Eastern Command.

India has pumped in close to 68,000 additional troops and associated equipment in Eastern Ladakh, deployment was also strengthened

along the LAC in the central sectors as well as the Eastern Command.

As part of the changes, the HQ UB, which only had one brigade under it along with some Scout Battalions, got a total of three brigades as the LAC heated up. The new ones included Joshimath-based 9 (Independent) Mountain Brigade, Pithoragarh-based 119 Brigade and the Pooh-based 136 Brigade.

The Dehradun based 14 Division, which was earlier under the Western Command, was also brought under HQ UB.

With the raising of the 18 Corps, the Army will now have a total of seven corps dedicated to guarding the borders with China, up from the earlier five.

Besides the 18 Corps, the LAC also got an additional strike corps since 2020 after Mathura-based 1 Strike Corps was reoriented to the border with China from that with Pakistan, as part of the larger changes in deployment.

The Central Command is operationally responsible for the defence of the central sector along the LAC and the international Border with Nepal – stretching across the four states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

It is also home to 13 Category 'A' training establishments, 18 regimental centres and a large number of logistics establishments.

Military sources said these training establishments are likely to be moved to the Southern Commznd where the army is less likely to face operational challenges and might just beef up naval amphibian operations, for which it might raise four battalions of Marines on lines of UK's Royal Marines.

**Book Review: 'Women In Tibet: Past And Present'**

22 February 2024, [Feminism in India](#)

*Women in Tibet: Past and Present*, edited by Janet Gyatso and Hanna Havnevik, offers a thorough examination of Tibetan women's lives, covering their history, challenges, and achievements. This anthology sheds light on often overlooked narratives, emphasising

women's resilience, agency, and societal contributions. It explores the complexities of Tibetan women's experiences over time, revealing evolving socio-cultural dynamics and their impact on women's roles and aspirations. Beginning with an exploration of women's roles in the traditional society of Tibet, the anthology draws from historical sources such as ancient texts and inscriptions from the Tibetan empire era. Authors in this section analyse gender relations, family structures, and religious practices, providing nuanced insights into historical experiences.

In the latter part of the book, attention turns to contemporary challenges faced by women in Tibet, examined through ethnographic research and field interviews. This section explores how modern political changes, migration, and globalisation have affected Tibetan women. It highlights their struggles to preserve cultural heritage amidst rapid change, with personal narratives illustrating resilience and determination. These stories emphasise women's empowerment, pursuit of education, and activism, showcasing their ability to enact positive change in their communities.

Throughout the chapters, a consistent theme revolves around the methodological challenges associated with studying '*Tibetan women*'. The authors discuss the inherent selectivity in reporting, the various historical perspectives on women's status within Tibetan society, and the recurring instances of deviations from established norms. It's noted that the category of women doesn't align precisely with the fluid gender norms that exist, and caution is repeatedly emphasised regarding the perils of overgeneralisation. These perils are not solely due to indigenous and physical disparities but also because of the evolving conceptions of womanhood and personhood, regardless of gender, throughout Tibetan history.

As the analysis progresses, the focus expands to include recurring motifs such as religion and spirituality, with a particular emphasis on the portrayal of women's bodies across multiple chapters. The evolution of the function and significance attributed to women's bodies is

observed, transitioning from primarily serving as conduits for family lineage perpetuation in ancient Tibetan society to becoming significant centers of political expression in contemporary Tibetan culture. This transformation is closely intertwined with another theme present in the anthology: the women's endeavor to reclaim their Tibetan identity and culture while asserting their voices amidst political challenges

The body of the Tibetan woman as a site of reproduction

The *Genealogy* of the imperial household offers a fascinating glimpse into the intricate dynamics of women's roles in historical Tibet. It predominantly lists consorts who bore heirs, prompting speculation about whether a consort's fame was solely tied to her ability to produce male heirs for the throne (p.46). This raises questions about the overlooked consorts who played vital roles in the imperial court regardless of childbirth. Empresses, even if they bore heirs, were seldom mentioned in historical records, indicating their relative visibility compared to other consorts and wives, whose recognition often came posthumously. Additionally, sisters and daughters of emperors were mentioned only upon marriage, suggesting their significance depended on being entrusted to another man's care, often unrelated.

In a similar breath of thought, the *Annals* too shed light on the differentiation in forms of address amongst the various female members of the imperial household on the basis of their utility, with mothers to heirs of the throne being honored as 'yum' (mother) or 'chi' (grandmother) or sometimes even the high-ranking title of 'mangmoje' signifying their role as the sovereign lady of many. Furthermore, the hierarchical structure of the imperial household, with titles like 'empress' applied to various women, including the principal consort and imperial princesses, underscores the complexity of women's roles and ranks. This intricate web of titles and roles reflects the intricate nature of women's positions within the imperial court, each title representing a

different facet of their significance in the historical narrative

The body of the Tibetan woman as a symbol of disruption

In Tibetan society, traditional gender roles require young men to pursue monastic life, while young women are expected to enter patrilocal marriages (p.263). These roles are rooted in the belief that women possess limited mental capacities compared to men, implying their perceived inferiority in emotional regulation, bodily control, and focused thinking (ibid). This division reinforces women as foundational support for male endeavors and forms spatial distinctions, placing the female body in the profane realm and the male mind in the sacred sphere.

However, young women, especially from economically disadvantaged areas, started showing interest in nunhood to **escape household burdens** and labor (p.277). This trend grew where arranged marriages and women's heavy farm work became societal norms (ibid). Voluntary celibacy and opting out of motherhood provided autonomy for vulnerable women facing state birth control measures.

As Charlene Mackley argues, nuns challenge established gender norms in Tibetan society, especially with the state enforcing childbirth quotas and the encroachment of Han and Muslim Chinese settlements, diminishing male authority (p.283). The androgynous appearance of young nuns highlights the contrast between marriage and procreation in a society where both are scarce. Despite leading celibate lives, nuns often faced scandalous gossip, silently enduring societal representations of their ritually marked bodies (p.284). Their rejection of traditional gender roles made them central in opposing evolving gender practices, seen as perplexing and multifaceted (ibid). This gossip attributed to nuns a significant, unintentional influence in disrupting the gender binary foundation of Tibetan social structures. Consequently, nuns' bodies symbolise a society in transition, caught between tradition and transformation



The body of the Tibetan woman as a site of political resistance

In the struggle against the Chinese state, Tibetan women have found their bodies to be powerful tools of political defiance, transcending individual incidents like forced abortion and sterilisation to embody deeply personal resistance (p.362). Negative experiences, such as betrayal or witnessing abuse, often manifest physically or mentally, highlighting the strong link between psychological and somatic well-being across different backgrounds, including urban and rural women, educated and uneducated, and various historical periods.

In Lhasa's prisons, women's bodies become focal points of conflict and resistance, particularly evident in the accounts of incarcerated nuns who endured imprisonment from a young age (p.334). As public spaces shrink, women's bodies become contested terrain, symbolising cultural identity and group cohesion through concise, emotionally charged rituals reflecting Tibetan values.

Tibetan nuns have significantly reshaped protest into a non-violent act, intertwining it with ritual, religion, and femininity (p.333). Through methods like singing, hunger strikes, and prayers in prison, they demonstrated that these actions are deeply internalised and aligned with Tibetan Buddhist principles. Their non-violent strategies effectively portrayed the state as an oppressive force to the international community, challenging the state's narrative of authority and masculinity (p.337). These acts of resistance affirmed cultural identity and countered physical manifestations of political oppression.

Beyond nuns, the state also utilises the female form to assert control, as seen in the case of correctional officials at Drapchi prison who banned nuns from cutting their hair, turning the body into a stage for political displays once again

The shortcomings of the book

While commendable, the book on Tibetan women lacks depth in certain areas. It could have provided a more thorough analysis of the

historical and cultural factors influencing Tibetan women's status, offering deeper insights into socio-political dynamics and traditional customs. Additionally, while addressing challenges faced by Tibetan women, it could have explored key issues like education, healthcare, and employment opportunities in greater detail to provide a nuanced understanding of their struggles.

Moreover, the book primarily focuses on Tibetan women's narratives within Tibetan society, overlooking their interactions and contributions on a broader scale. Exploring their engagement with the international community, experiences of Tibetan women in exile, and involvement in global feminist movements would have offered a more holistic perspective.

Lastly, while touching upon external forces like the Chinese occupation and modernisation, the book lacks a critical analysis of their impact on Tibetan women's lives. A deeper examination of the complexities and specific challenges faced by Tibetan women in the contemporary political climate would have enriched the discussion.

Before this book's publication, scholarship on Tibetan women largely focused on autobiographies of prominent figures like Ama Adhe (*The Voice that Remembers: A Tibetan Woman's Inspiring Story of Survival*) or narratives of nuns and female mystics in Tibetan Buddhism (*Women of Wisdom, Lady of the Lotus-Born: The Life and Enlightenment of Yeshe Tsogyal*). These accounts overlooked the experiences of ordinary Tibetan women, creating a gap in understanding. *Women in Tibet: Past and Present* fills this void by presenting diverse stories of Tibetan women from various backgrounds and time periods.

This collection not only contributes to academic discourse but also engages policymakers, activists, and the general public in discussions about gender in Tibetan society. It encourages further research and advocacy for Tibetan women's rights on a global scale. Additionally, it has empowered formerly incarcerated Tibetan women to step forward

and share their firsthand narratives of experiences as prisoners, as seen in recent publications like *Tibet in Chains: The Stories of Nine Tibetan Nuns*. In conclusion, *Women in Tibet: Past and Present* is a significant milestone in Tibetan women's studies, highlighting their struggles and accomplishments while promoting inclusivity and equity for the future.

A window of opportunity for Western companies to quit Xinjiang

22 February 2024, [Financial Times](#)

When Volkswagen decided more than a decade ago to build a plant in China's Xinjiang region with Chinese partner, SAIC, the aim was not primarily to sell cars to the local market. It was also to appease Chinese authorities who demanded the joint €170mn investment in return for approving VW's plans to expand in Guangdong, as someone acquainted with the discussions over the plant recently told me. Now the German auto group is learning the hard way that politically-driven investments have the potential to become hefty financial and reputational risks. The company has been disqualified by Germany's Union Investment for its sustainable funds after media published claims that forced labour had been used by the joint venture to build a test track in the region. Forced labour has been a feature of the government's crackdown on the mainly Muslim Uyghur population and other minorities. Human rights groups have estimated that more than 1mn Uyghurs and other Muslims were detained over a period of several years, while thousands have been reported to have been transferred out of the region to work in factories, some supplying global brands. After Handelsblatt published the allegations on the test track, VW announced that it was reviewing the future of its partnership there. VW's review came just days after BASF revealed it would sell stakes in two Xinjiang chemical plants following separate allegations of human rights abuses involving its joint venture partner. Is it just coincidence

that, after years of refusing to disinvest for fear of angering Chinese authorities, two of Germany's biggest industrial companies are now willing to brave a political backlash by calling into question the future of their investments there? Not likely, according to several people with long experience of working in China. Each company has specific reasons, but it may also be that a rare window of opportunity has opened to exit uncomfortable investments in China — at least for those companies still publicly demonstrating their commitment to the country. This week Beijing reported that in 2023 China attracted the lowest level of foreign direct investment for 30 years. Investor confidence has been shaken by trade tensions with the US, slowing economic growth, a continuing property crisis and industrial overcapacity. In response, the government wants to revive growth by winning foreign investors back. So punishing two of the country's biggest foreign investors for reviewing or selling insignificant investments in Xinjiang would be the wrong signal to send, says Max Zenglein, chief economist at China consultancy Merics. VW is pouring €5bn into China's electric vehicle sector, while BASF is spending €10bn on a state of the art chemical plant. "This is a very opportune time to get out," Zenglein says. "This is a chance for companies to stop saying nothing is going on in Xinjiang." One executive who has lived and worked in China for more than 20 years also believes that for VW and BASF, at least, the timing is propitious. China "wants the foreign investment. Officials are very explicit about the economic challenge . . . Do you really want to punish those guys that are still pouring money into the economy when everyone is running for the exit?" Meanwhile, it is clear that western regulations demanding clean supply chains are beginning to bite, he adds. Ensuring traceability is difficult in most parts of the world, but particularly in China. VW found this out to great cost. Thousands of its cars have been held up in US customs because the company unwittingly violated the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act when a small

supplier used tiny components from Xinjiang. In Germany, companies found to have violated the country's new supply chain laws, which also ban forced labour, face fines of up to 2 per cent of global turnover. Beijing may hotly deny allegations of human rights violations in Xinjiang. But it also wants foreign investment. Perhaps that means that VW and BASF can finally extricate themselves from Xinjiang without a political backlash. If so, that would be good for their shareholders. It may also encourage other companies to move faster to quit the region. But the departure of two such high profile names could also mean less access to international working conditions, and less scrutiny of operations. "It feels bad," the executive said. "No one there will care any more if there is forced labour."

China, Xi Jinping and the making of 'one people, one ideology'

20 February 2024, [Financial Times](#)

It is rare that disagreements among China's political elite are reflected or even hinted at in public. So the high drama that unfolded between Xi Jinping, Beijing's authoritarian leader, and Hu Jintao, his predecessor, in front of the world's television cameras in 2022 rated as communist box office. Xi and Hu were sitting next to each other before the massed ranks of deputies at the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist party, a convocation so important that it is held only once every five years. Xi had used the congress to secure a third term as head of the party, a distinction that effectively meant he was set up to become China's "leader for life". But something was amiss. At the closing ceremony, Hu reached to take a red folder in front of him. Another Chinese official slid it out of his grasp. Xi then signalled to an orderly who grabbed Hu under an armpit and escorted him from the auditorium. On the way out, Hu touched the shoulder of Li Keqiang, China's premier, a former protégé, but the premier offered him only the merest of acknowledgments. As Hu was hustled out, none of a seated row of top officials even so much as turned to wish him well. They stared

straight ahead, studiously ignoring his humiliation.

This chilling episode is one of many analysed in a probing new book by Steve Tsang and Olivia Cheung, two respected sinologists at Soas University of London. Over seven chapters, it dissects what must have a claim to be the most important yet least understood political philosophy of our age. The Political Thought of Xi Jinping jettisons a vogue for China books with sensationalist titles (Danger Zone, Destined for War, When China Rules the World and so on) but offers a valuable service. Patient scholarship is deployed to slash through a jungle of jargon and impenetrable doublespeak until shafts of light shine through. Understanding what is truly meant by Xi's "community with a shared future for humankind", "Chinese Dream", "dual circulation" and several other slogans is part of the demystifying process. But the ultimate conclusion of Tsang and Cheung could not be more stark. "In short, Xi's vision puts the Party led by himself front and centre to forge a single powerful country with all its people united in the ambition of restoring China to its 'historic' place as the centre of the world," they write. Thus, all of Xi's circumlocutions end with a single ambition — "One Country, One People, One Ideology, One Party and One Leader". Anything or anybody who gets in the way — as Hu apparently did that day — is dealt with. The reason that Hu was prevented from opening the red folder, Tsang and Cheung say, is that the dossier inside would have revealed that his protégé, Hu Chunhua, had failed to secure promotion to the politburo. With this move, Xi was amputating his predecessor's power base. Another book that seeks to demystify the world's second superpower is China's World View by David Daokui Li, one of China's most high-profile academics and founding dean of the Schwarzman College at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Li has also served as an influential adviser to China's central bank. Given his status as an insider, readers might expect a recitation of CCP talking points. But this thought-provoking book is far more nuanced, honest

and at times critical of China's reality. Written in the vein of a tutorial for interested foreign observers, Li's book seeks to explain how China really works, with chapters on the central government, local governments, corruption, the environment and other aspects of the national polity. Li's view of Xi is much more favourable than that of Tsang and Cheung. At times, he lets slip fascinating vignettes: Xi's first wife, Ke Lingling, sought to divorce him, wanting to emigrate to the UK. "For one year, every week he would make phone calls to the UK to persuade her to come back," Li writes. Ke did not heed his entreaties and the couple divorced in 1982. Li portrays Xi as a detail-orientated leader with a thirst for first-hand knowledge. In a meeting that Li attended, Xi is quoted as saying: "I want to taste the steam bun myself. I don't want other people to chew it for me." One big challenge that Xi faces, according to Li, is that as people become better educated — with over 50 per cent of young people attending college — they are increasingly argumentative and expressive. "Obviously, no Chinese leaders confronted such an issue until now," he writes. In the chapter on local governments, he is similarly frank. He tells the story of a highly capable local official named Chen, who knew that "superb job performance would not be enough to secure a promotion". Chen chose to bribe a powerful political mentor who himself was later sentenced to life in prison for taking "huge bribes". Chen went down in the fallout, confessing to bribery and ending up in jail. The reader is left with a sense of how difficult China's governance model makes it for local officials to remain uncorrupted. But Li remains optimistic, seeing a future reminiscent of Singapore, in which officials are paid so handsomely that the incentive to be corrupt is diminished. The final chapter in his book argues that the rise of China is unlikely to cause a war — either hot or cold — with the US. Li's argument rests on an assertion that China's emergence will provide economic opportunities for most people in the world, more public goods in the form of advances in

science and technology, and a more effective fight against climate change. This may be true but only up to a point. The much less appealing reality for many in the west is that as Chinese industries climb the value chain, they are eating away at the market share of the west's most vaunted corporations. Politicians in Washington, Brussels, Berlin and elsewhere are growing increasingly concerned that China's rise will not enhance the west but hollow it out. And that, to borrow Tsang and Cheung's vision, will embolden China's ambition of seizing a place at the centre of world affairs.

[Echoes From Forgotten Mountains: Tibet In War & Peace](#)  
19 February 2024, [Rising Kashmir](#)

The history of mankind since its earliest recorded versions in as many languages as thinkable has been fraught with internecine conflicts for reasons ranging from an insatiable lust for land, women or hoisting one's views on others by means that may not be commensurate with a civilized world. Unfortunately even to this day and date the same mentality is being extended by a powerful community or nation on a weaker side throwing international consideration and propriety to dogs. From present day Ukraine and Armenia to Israel –Palestine the year of 2023 is no different from the era of late 1940s or early 1950s when the Chinese Juggernaut steamrolled into the so called 'Roof of the world' (Tibet) crushing in one go one of the most peaceful loving people inhabiting this planet of ours.

This 75 year old struggle of Tibetans against the People's Republic of China seems to have been stymied by an evil combination resulting of 'iron curtaining' of information emanating from that hapless region as also a systematic sinicization by the CCP (Chinese communist party). Be that as it may, a plethora of excellent books written from a firsthand account of happenings have been tumbling out of this iron curtain to afford a peep into one of the most highly surveillance-hit occupied territories of the world i.e. Tibet. The latest book to join this

bandwagon of expose on Tibet is 'Echoes from forgotten mountains: Tibet in war and peace' penned by none other than the irresistible Tibetan resistance fighter cum author of repute and an independence activist 'Jamyang Norbu'. A Kalimpongborn Tibetan having joined the resistance movement in the 1970s who has been highly critical of meekness of the Exile government towards Chinese high handedness since long , despite fickle American support combined with a world of indifference; Jamyang Norbu is a 'one man army' out to tear into the Chinese perfidy with all his might at his command.

Though in the past, dime a dozen books of repute on Tibetan affairs have hit the reader's stands, but nothing comes closer even by a whisker to this book when told with such power and insight that can only ride on the shoulders of an excellent writer like Jamyang Norbu. Ever since he began writing historical plays for the 'Tibetan institute of performing arts' in the 1970s, Norbu realized that to document Tibetan history and culture was to resist against its erasure. Over the years he became one of the sharpest chroniclers of his people .doggedly tracking archival material and persuading Tibetans to tell their stories.

This masterpiece of book is neatly divided into 40 chapters with some of the titles taking a reader on to a roller coaster ride itself of Tibetan struggle from its very inception stage-- 'The ghosts of Chamdo, Seventeen point swindle, Requiem,Nest of spies, March winds , A crane from Lithang, wind and wildfire ,The man whose luck dried up, The golden throne or Four rivers six ranges to name a few. Norbu's book is a detailed and accurate record of the Tibetan resistance against communist china from the first few months of 1950, when Tibet was invaded by communist china. The intrepid writer that Norbu is ,takes a reader on a journey that is lost in time and space ,conjuring up the lush green forests of Markham, Lhasa's bustling Banakshneighbourhood, the meadows of Lithang, the besieged fortress of Tsethang, the mountain hold out of Mustang in northern Nepal etc. In these places, countless

Tibetans rich and poor, monks and lay people, devout Buddhists, and devoted skeptics, oracles and intellectuals, men, women, children and the elderly, aristocrats and commoners, Lhasa urbanites and steppe nomads lived ,fought ,died and hoped.

Norbu tells a reader of 'Yunru Pun', the unassuming tribal chief who led the 1955 Lithang uprising that were the first embers in a rebellion which would reverberate the entire eastern Tibet before spreading its arch of fire towards Lhasa; of Phagpa ,the lord Chamberlain who Norbu suspects masterminded the great escape of Dalai Lama from Lhasa in 1959;of ChushiGangdruk's death –defying 'Long ride north' through the desolate Changtang plateau, the PLA hot on their heels, a mirror image of Mao's long march ; of Trinlay ,the nun who thrown out of her monastery by the 'Red guards' became 'Nyemo Achi' the leader of the rebel army of the Gods as Tibet buckled under the cultural revolution.

A discerning reader will find to his delight that this seminal book in particular embellishes two main protagonists who are the main anvils around which this entire narrative of Tibetan struggle weaves its web. First personality to cast his mesmerizing effect on the readers is 'Bhusang, the man whose luck dried up' and Norbu himself. The first born into a peasant family chafing under aristocratic overlords; the second, to one such aristocratic clan but forced into semi-exile in India long before Chinese annexation. 'Bhusang' a rookie doctor in Lhasa when it rebelled against china in 1959 joined the CIA-trained operatives sent to Tibet to help the resistance.

India –raised Norbu was witness to these echoes of doomed struggles, opting to join what remained of it in northern Nepal before going to France to see if Paris's support of Tibet would be more tangible than Washington's. Both men saw their dreams turn to dust. Captured by the PLA, Bhusang spent years in Chinese jails, labour camps finding upon release that his wife had remarried and his children had starved to death. He left the country he had fought for, and where nothing



was left for him to further dream on. Norbu after resistance's demise turned to writing and activism. Such were the vicissitudes of life that were the hallmark of the numerous Tibetan resistance fighters that are recreated in all their complexity, richness and defiance which a reader would find this book unstoppable once he leaves through its various pages.

Tibet has been in the news recently, which is significant because on 23 August 2023 Beijing released the 2023 edition of the 'Standard map of China' which included Taiwan, the South China Sea, Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin as Chinese territories. A few days later Xinhua news agency reported that president Xi Jinping in a letter addressed to 2023 'Forum on the development of Xizang' had validated the change of name of India's northern neighbor from Tibet to Xizang. The forum itself was called: 'New era, New Xizang, New journey: New chapter in Xizang's high quality development and human rights protection. The ultimate culmination of a long travel of sinicization of Tibet.

With India too locking horns with its bête noire in the high plateau of Tibet and the Galwan clash too fresh in the psyche of the country, this masterpiece of book on Tibet couldn't have come at a better time. In these circumstances, the publication of 'Echoes from forgotten mountains—Tibet in war and peace' is reminding us of about what exactly happened to Tibet in the bygone era and still continuing too in all its ferocity.

**Hong Kong's economy needs reinvention to become more than just China's superconnector after a lost half decade**  
18 February 2024, [South China Morning Post](#)

The Hong Kong economy has had a lost half decade. It shrank in two of the last five years; 3.2 per cent GDP growth last year did not make up for the 3.5 per cent contraction in 2022. Growth in the coming years may continue to be sluggish as the mainland Chinese economy grapples with high levels of debt – especially in property – excess capacity and

insufficient demand, deflationary pressures, and a persistent decline in asset values.

Hong Kong's economic woes should trigger a deep rethink of what it needs to do to maintain its relevance in a global economy that has changed dramatically since the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, changes accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The evidence of the last 26 years points to an inescapable conclusion: even if being a superconnector to the mainland is a necessary condition of Hong Kong's growth and prosperity, it is not a sufficient one. The city should strive to be much more than just a superconnector of mainland China. Three arguments support this conclusion.

### **Hong Kong's superconnector status hasn't helped it outperform other Asian hubs**

First, despite being the superconnector for China – the world's fastest-growing economy over the last three decades – Hong Kong's growth has lagged behind Singapore's by a considerable margin. As recently as 2003, Hong Kong's GDP per capita of about US\$26,000 was roughly the same as Singapore's. Today, Singapore's GDP per capita, at over US\$82,000, is nearly 70 per cent higher than Hong Kong's despite mainland China growing much faster than Southeast Asia during the last three decades.

Clearly, Singapore's superior performance was not just because it was the superconnector of Southeast Asia. Instead, Singapore established itself as a key node in global value chains in a number of high value-added industries – electronics, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals and biotech, and precision engineering to name a few. By contrast, Hong Kong's economy has become too specialised in a few highly correlated services – finance and insurance, real estate, trade and logistics, business services and tourism – and is too reliant on growth in the mainland.

Defenders of Hong Kong's model say that compared with Singapore, it is more productive because it is more market-driven, less dependent on government interventions, and therefore less vulnerable to governmental

mistakes and corruption. About three decades ago, economists such as Alwyn Young argued that Hong Kong's growth model was more sustainable than Singapore's because whereas growth in Hong Kong was led by total factor productivity (TFP, a measure of innovation), growth in Singapore was driven mainly by factor accumulation (perspiration rather than inspiration).

Young's predictions have not come to pass. There is little evidence in the last 30 years to indicate that Hong Kong's economy has had higher TFP growth or is more innovative than Singapore's. Meanwhile, as the Hong Kong economy became ever more specialised and reliant on the mainland, its gains in efficiency may have been outweighed by the loss of diversity and resilience.

### **Being a superconnector has reduced Hong Kong's economic diversity**

The literature on regional integration is largely positive: economies grow faster when they integrate with larger markets. But the literature also highlights some risks for smaller economies – risks that Hong Kong should always have been alert to. For instance, firms and talent may leave for better opportunities in larger, faster-growing markets. The manufacturing sector may be hollowed out, and the loss of manufacturing reduces opportunities for technology learning and upgrading.

In addition to these risks of integration, Hong Kong has also given up a vital tool of macroeconomic stabilisation – monetary policy – because of its pegged exchange rate.

Rather than enable it to enjoy the best of both worlds, being a superconnector combined with the US dollar peg may have consigned Hong Kong to the worst of both worlds in the last two years. China's structural problems have meant there has been no post-Covid rebound, while the US dollar peg has deprived Hong Kong of the ability to lower interest rates or the exchange rate to support the economy.

Looking ahead, interest rates in the United States are likely to be reduced this year; this would relieve the pressure on the Hong Kong

dollar and allow interest rates in Hong Kong to come down to levels more suited to its context. But Hong Kong's excessive reliance on growth in the mainland will not be reduced any time soon. With GDP growth in China likely to slow to 3-4 per cent in the next 10 years, one would have to be blindly optimistic to believe that growth in Hong Kong would not be adversely affected.

### **It has also reduced Hong Kong's policy space and undermined its international character**

The Covid-19 pandemic forced Hong Kong to choose between its connections with the mainland and its connections with the rest of the world. Rightly or wrong, it prioritised the former over the latter. But because China's zero-Covid policy was increasingly misaligned and out-of-sync with global norms and practices, Hong Kong found itself isolated and perceived as "just another Chinese city".

More so than the National Security Law, zero-Covid did considerable harm to Hong Kong's reputation as an international city. It also showed how maladaptive the Hong Kong government had become. As the virus evolved to become more transmissible and less deadly, and as the rest of the world outside China adapted to live with the virus, Hong Kong's persistence with draconian zero-Covid restrictions – even after Covid-19 had become endemic in the city in early 2022 – showed the rest of the world that policymaking in Hong Kong had become less pragmatic and scientific. Zero-Covid also produced disastrous consequences for Hong Kong: it neither saved lives nor protected the economy. Compared with other jurisdictions in East Asia, Hong Kong has had more excess deaths during the pandemic, even as it delayed its economic recovery unnecessarily.

Zero-Covid also inflicted more trauma on Hong Kong's economy than the National Security Law did. At the height of zero-Covid madness in early 2022, tens of thousands of professionals in the business and financial sectors left Hong Kong – many to Singapore. And the trauma continues, not least because the Hong Kong government has not convened

an independent inquiry on its handling of Covid-19, without which the authorities will not have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, businesses will persist in their belief that the quality of policymaking has deteriorated, and residents will remain sceptical and cynical of the government – deepening Hong Kong’s existential crisis.

#### **Avoiding stasis and blind optimism**

In many of the Hong Kong government’s public pronouncements, there is a tendency to blame external factors for Hong Kong’s problems – high interest rates in the US, geopolitical tensions, Western efforts to contain China – while disregarding or downplaying domestic factors such as China’s slowdown, Hong Kong’s US dollar peg, and zero-Covid. While these stories may be understandable from a political communication perspective, they hurt Hong Kong more in the long run.

First, these narratives do not do the Hong Kong people or the economy any favours. They create the impression that all of Hong Kong’s problems are created by outsiders or enemies abroad. Not only does this damage Hong Kong’s standing as an international city, it also does not help Hongkongers understand the complex challenges the city faces in a less globalised, more polarised world. These narratives create simplistic, binary, and ultimately false, stories that Hong Kong is caught in a battle between East and West, between good and evil. In so doing, they polarise society even more.

Second, these narratives give the authorities a crutch and an excuse not to engage in a deeper, self-critical reflection of what Hong Kong needs to do to stay relevant. Why bother to change if we can easily scapegoat the West or blame others for Hong Kong’s problems?

Third, these narratives are often based on blindly optimistic predictions of China’s rise, and of the West’s decline. While this is a possibility, it is by no means guaranteed no matter how sincerely or strongly we hold these beliefs. They also promote excessive optimism in the face of our problems and failings. While optimism is usually a good mental disposition,

we should avoid the denialism, defensiveness, and self-delusion that the writer Lu Xun described so well in *The True Story of Ah Q*.

Rather, Hong Kong’s policymakers should seize the opportunity that the current economic malaise offers to engage in a far-reaching exercise on how the Hong Kong economy should be adapted, even reinvented, for the future. Doing so would not only signal to the world that Hong Kong has every intention to remain an essential node of the global economy, it would also give Hongkongers more reason to be confident in Hong Kong’s future.

#### **Xi Jinping’s Succession Dilemma**

17 February 2024, [Asia Society](#)

The most intellectually honest answer to the question of who will succeed **Xi Jinping** as China’s paramount leader is simply, “We don’t know.”

Xi’s succession is the ultimate “known unknown” of Chinese politics. We do not know when Xi will leave office. We do not know how Xi will leave office. We do not know whether Xi will handpick a political heir. We do not even know how a successor would be chosen if Xi does not designate one.

This opacity is concerning. China is arguably the world’s second most powerful country. Xi’s role as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gives him a central role in economic, diplomatic, and military decisions that reverberate across the globe.

Would a new leader embrace or reject Xi’s legacy? Governments and businesses everywhere have a stake in his replacement’s preferences on political control, market reform, U.S.-China relations, and territorial ambition regarding Taiwan and the South China Sea. But it is hard to speculate about the future of such issues without any insight into the nature of Xi’s departure or how his successor would be selected.

Still, the absence of clear foresight does not mean we should just throw up our hands and not think about Xi’s succession. Peering into a future largely devoid of information makes it

even more important to identify and evaluate the evidence that does exist.

Such evidence does not tell us what *will* happen with Xi's succession. But it does allow us to engage in informed conjecture about what *might* happen. The evidence includes Xi's political behavior over his first 11 years in power, the history of succession politics in the CCP and other Leninist governing parties, and a handful of Party-state regulations.

This evidence leads to three conjectures: First, Xi is unlikely to anoint a successor, or at least not a strong successor, well in advance. Second, the ultimate outcome of Xi's succession is unlikely to be orderly or predictable, because of contending political networks and manipulable Party regulations. Third, the policy outcomes of Xi's succession will depend on China's situation when he leaves office, although some continuities are probable regardless of Xi's performance.

#### **Xi is Unlikely to Anoint a Successor Far in Advance**

There are many ways Xi could leave office, including a voluntary resignation, an elite rebellion, a military coup, or a sudden illness — with huge potential for variation within each scenario. Several possibilities are discussed by **Richard McGregor** and **Jude Blanchette** in their stellar article *After Xi: Future Scenarios for Leadership Succession in Post-Xi Jinping Era*.

Xi will likely rule China until he “goes to meet Marx,” as the saying goes. Xi had acquired enough power to ignore the nascent precedent saying he should indicate a successor at the 19th Party Congress in 2017. The next year, he amended the state constitution to remove term limits on his concurrent role as head of state, allowing him to rule for life as president as well as head of the Party and the military. In 2022, at age 69, Xi ignored previous norms that said leaders aged 68 or older should retire from the Politburo.

Xi is unlikely to voluntarily name a successor, let alone hand over power, anytime soon. Doing so could weaken his authority, exacerbate divisions within his network of

supporters, and eventually threaten his political legacy and personal safety. And right now, Xi's power — especially his centralized control of personnel, ideology, security services, and the military — makes it very difficult for any rivals to organize against him, even if his policies become unpopular.

Elite rebellion is not impossible. Research conducted by **Milan Svolik** shows that two-thirds of deposed authoritarians fall to inside challengers. **Yuhua Wang** finds that almost 60% of Chinese emperors who did not exit office by natural death were murdered, deposed, forced to abdicate, or forced to commit suicide by regime elites. A conceivable trigger for Xi would be an economic depression or military misadventure, or if he began purging his closest allies.

Naming a successor could undermine Xi's authority. Once Xi announces the next paramount leader, he could become a lame duck as the political elite begin to softly cultivate ties with and take more political cues from the successor. Even if that person did nothing but follow Xi's orders, there would effectively be more than one power center in the Party. The successor would also provide a focal point that would make it somewhat less difficult for Party insiders to rally against Xi's leadership in any moment of crisis.

Choosing a successor could also weaken Xi's political support. Xi would probably choose a close political ally to advance his political project. But that choice would mean not choosing others, which could alienate top lieutenants who are overlooked. It could also empower lower-ranking officials with close ties to the designated heir, while disempowering those without such ties. Such fractures could weaken Xi's ability to mobilize the Party elite to implement his decisions. If Xi were to try to overcome this problem by nominating an outside candidate, all his close allies might feel vulnerable, and together they could undermine the successor — and, by extension, Xi himself.

Finally, handing power to a successor could threaten Xi's legacy. Xi could retain formidable

informal influence after retirement, but he appears to prefer the security of formal office, having worked assiduously to institutionalize the powers of the general secretary and ban the informal “old person” politics practiced by **Deng Xiaoping** and **Jiang Zemin**. Leaving office would also render Xi vulnerable to the hidden preferences and political talents of his successor (indeed, few glimpsed Xi’s true colors before he became leader and began displaying the extent of his personal ambition and political skill). His anti-corruption campaign and ideological crackdowns have made him many enemies, and Xi may fear for his freedom and safety, or at least for the longevity of his policy priorities. More fundamentally, Xi seems to see himself as a man of destiny, a true believer in the Party’s mission of national rejuvenation and his own ability to achieve that goal. One look at U.S. politics is enough to see that politicians everywhere have egos and like to stick around. *But there are good reasons for Xi to have a plan, or multiple plans ...*

We cannot see into Xi’s mind, and any succession plan that currently exists would be one of his most closely guarded political secrets. In his excellent book *Party of One: The Rise of Xi Jinping and China’s Superpower Future*, **Chun Han Wong** makes the most persuasive counterargument that an orderly succession is in the cards. Wong contends that “Xi’s ability to engineer a smooth succession could determine whether his vision of a rejuvenated China will survive him.” If Xi can install a strong successor who will continue his policy agenda and protect his family, that could avoid a power struggle that risks dividing the Party, harming the country, and undermining Xi’s legacy. Xi would surely like to do this, but the political price could be prohibitive.

Party history offers little precedent that would appeal to Xi in this regard. **Mao Zedong** launched the Cultural Revolution in part to attack his heir apparent, **Liu Shaoqi**, for undermining Maoist economic policy. **Lin Biao**, the next designated successor, died in a plane

crash as he attempted to flee Beijing after his son hatched a plot to assassinate Mao. Deng Xiaoping purged his first two protégés, **Hu Yaobang** and **Zhao Ziyang**, for wavering in their commitment to Party dominance, and then he had to force Jiang Zemin to re-embrace economic reform with his 1992 “Southern Tour.” And Xi must surely see how Jiang’s support for his own rise ended up severely curtailing Jiang’s political influence.

The pitfalls outlined above will likely discourage Xi from naming a replacement anytime soon, even to the detriment of his longer-term legacy. The likeliest precedent for Xi’s succession would therefore be that of Mao to **Hua Guofeng**. Following Lin Biao’s death in 1971, Mao eyed **Wang Hongwen** as his successor, then changed his mind and eventually tapped Hua Guofeng five months before dying in September 1976. Hua was plucked from relative obscurity but barely lasted two years as paramount leader until Deng outmaneuvered him (although both sought to revise Maoist policies).

This history illuminates another confounding variable in succession prognostications: Xi might change his mind, perhaps even multiple times, about whether to appoint a successor and who it ought to be. As Xi ages, he could increasingly cultivate political heirs, and he will likely have to delegate more duties to subordinates. But the very hint of Xi’s retirement would be a seismic shock to elite politics, and the reaction of perceived allies and adversaries will influence his thinking. If he feels uneasy or threatened, he could cancel his plans. Likewise, even if a successor is decided, if Xi comes to doubt their loyalty or competence, that designation may not last.

### **Xi’s Succession is Unlikely to be Orderly or Predictable**

Xi’s successor is unlikely to be as powerful, regardless of how the succession occurs. The later a successor is appointed prior to Xi’s departure, the weaker they are likely to be. If Xi appoints no successor, different networks of Xi followers are likely to struggle over the top job.



Much of this uncertainty stems from the Party's lack of clear succession mechanisms. Mao tapped Hua, Deng ousted Hua, Deng elevated Jiang, Deng anointed Hu, and then Jiang supported Xi. It is backroom politics through and through.

Xi's selection as Hu's heir apparent after the 17th Party Congress in 2007 was reportedly helped by his victory over **Li Keqiang** in a straw poll of senior officials. But Xi ended intra-Party voting after 2012 in favor of choosing new leadership lineups through elite interviews.

If Xi picks a successor, he will likely go through the motions of an orchestrated but seemingly rigorous selection process to bolster the legitimacy of the chosen cadre. He could also embed the choice in authoritative Party documents and make other leaders declare their assent, making it more difficult (or at least more awkward) to turn on the successor.

If Xi experiences a sudden health incident, there is no way to know what would happen next. Article 23 of the Party charter simply states that the general secretary is elected by a plenum of the Central Committee and must be drawn from the ranks of the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC). Xi's successor would likely, but not necessarily, be a current PSC member, because a plenum could technically add a new member and then make that person the general secretary.

But how would the Central Committee even convene a plenum without a general secretary? The Party Charter says that the Politburo is responsible for convening plenums, but it is the general secretary who is responsible for convening the Politburo. This legal conundrum lays bare the importance of informal power in determining political outcomes in Beijing.

*History can be a guide to the future ...*

The best account of the transition from Mao to Hua to Deng is **Joseph Torigan's** book *Prestige, Manipulation, and Coercion*, the title of which sets out the three key factors that matter for succession struggles in Leninist one-party regimes.

First, the importance of prestige means that victory often depends more on interpersonal authority than policy differences or economic interests. If we apply this theory to the case study of Xi's succession, we can examine the different networks that connect senior leaders below Xi.

Two potential rival networks of Xi loyalists seem to be emerging. The first is a group of officials connected to Fujian Province who either got to know Xi when he was a local leader there from 1985 to 2002 or worked with him there afterward, including Xi's chief of staff **Cai Qi** and new economic czar **He Lifeng**. The second is a group of officials with similar ties through Zhejiang Province, where Xi was leader from 2002 to 2007. Atop this group is **Li Qiang**, who, as premier, leads the work of the ministries in the State Council. However, we know little of the personal relationships between top leaders or the possible coherence of such networks without Xi. And, the longer Xi rules, the more of his longtime associates will retire into "Party elder" status and vie for post-Xi political influence with emerging "seventh generation" leaders born in the 1970s.

Second, victory depends on coercion. That is, gaining the support or control of the military, police, intelligence services, and other security-related ministries to enforce the succession. For Xi's succession, we might look at which networks of Xi followers appear well placed to leverage China's centers of coercive power.

One could argue that the Fujian network is best placed to deploy coercion. It likely includes top security official **Chen Wenqing** and Minister of Public Security **Wang Xiaohong**, as well as newly empowered Central Military Commission (CMC) Vice Chairman **He Weidong** and his fellow CMC member **Miao Hua**. Cai Qi's remit includes the Central Guard Bureau, which is responsible for the security of Party leaders. **Chen Yixin**, the minister of state security and a close colleague of Xi and Li Qiang in Zhejiang, could emerge as a rival powerbroker.

The third key factor, manipulation, means victory depends more on the ability to control the process of selection rather than playing to a defined “selectorate.” However, while rules can be bent or even ignored, the appearance of legality, legitimacy, and stability is still important.

If Xi were to depart suddenly, who could best manipulate the process of selection? The situation would be extremely fluid, but a case can be made that Cai Qi — or someone in his position in the future — would play a role. Cai has an unusually central role in managing internal Party affairs as a PSC member who leads both the Central Secretariat and the General Office of the Central Committee. He would likely be the first senior leader to learn of any developments regarding Xi’s health or decision-making.

The Party charter produces the legal conundrum discussed earlier, but Article 23 also establishes the Central Secretariat as the working body of the Politburo. In the absence of a general secretary, Cai could argue for a generous interpretation of this article that allows the Central Secretariat to call a Politburo meeting that then convenes a plenum.

An aspiring leader would not need universal support to pull this off. According to Article 25 of the Central Committee Work Regulations (which the General Office has the authority to interpret), only a majority of Politburo members must be present to hold a meeting. So, 13 Politburo members could convene a plenum. Article 24 says that a majority of Central Committee members then need to be present to hold a plenum. That is 103 members. Just half of those members are then needed to pass a decision. Thus, following the Party’s own rules, one would theoretically need the support of only 52 Central Committee members to appoint a new general secretary. (This minimum condition assumes that the 52 Central Committee members include 13 Politburo members.)

However, executing such a plan would require many other things to go one’s way, including control of the propaganda system, support

from the military and security services, and rivals too weak or disorganized to challenge the move. Moreover, any new leader would prefer to come to power with the façade of unanimous support within the Party.

Another wildcard could be the vice president. Article 84 of the state constitution says that if the presidency becomes vacant, then the vice president becomes president. While the largely ceremonial presidency is easily the least important of Xi’s three main roles, the new officeholder would hold constitutional powers to promulgate laws, appoint state leaders, grant special pardons, declare a state of emergency, and even declare war and issue mobilization orders.

However, the constitution says that the president exercises these powers “pursuant to decisions of the National People’s Congress and the National People’s Congress Standing Committee [NPCSC].” Still, an accidental president could still try to affect the succession process by blocking government action. If they collaborated with a powerful NPCSC chairman, they could use lawfare, new appointments, or emergency decrees to gain more leverage.

These thought exercises are not concrete forecasts, however, and they are most valuable as illustrations of the uncertainty and unpredictability of succession politics within the Party, especially if there is a sudden succession crisis or a move to depose an anointed yet unpopular successor.

### **Post-Succession Policies Will Depend on Xi’s Level of Success**

The history of succession politics in China points to the third major conjecture about Xi’s succession. That history suggests the Party is more likely to continue Xi’s policy agenda if China is on a positive trajectory when he leaves office, and more likely to depart from Xi’s legacy if China is experiencing significant difficulties.

For example, strong elite and popular support for change emerged following Mao’s passing in 1976 in a society traumatized by the chaos of the Cultural Revolution and the disaster of the Great Leap Forward. Hua Guofeng and then

Deng Xiaoping embraced political loosening and economic reform.

Similarly, when Xi succeeded Hu in 2012, there was widespread social discontent with weak leadership, rampant corruption, and lax regulation, and Party insiders were alarmed by the disunity evident in the **Bo Xilai** scandal. A mood of crisis arguably helped Xi consolidate power.

It is impossible to say what China will look like by the time Xi's successor is determined. While pessimism is rising, and the country's growth trajectory will notably underperform its world-beating past, it is far from certain that China is destined for crisis or even for stagnation.

What is least likely to change after Xi is the continuation of CCP rule. The officials around Xi, whether they like him or not, have a vested interest in perpetuating the system that has defined their lives and careers. Not even the Cultural Revolution could convince cadres otherwise. Of course, Xi's departure would open a window for social protests, but the Party could probably still deploy its forbidding internal security forces to suppress dissent.

A successor will almost certainly owe much to Xi. They may lean into Xi's legacy to burnish their own legitimacy, at least at first, necessitating continued veneration for Xi Jinping Thought even if it is repurposed to advance different policy objectives, much as Deng did with Mao's legacy.

A successor is unlikely to enjoy Xi's same concentration of political authority, which would mean more power sharing, perhaps among different networks of Xi supporters. This could create a somewhat looser ideological environment with more room for policy debates and more decentralized governance. In that environment, Chinese society could become somewhat more open and tolerant.

An intriguing consideration that is leading some analysts to take a more optimistic view of China's political future is generational change — that is, future leaders may have different values, and so may govern differently. Research by **Wei Shan** and **Juan Chen** finds that young

Chinese are more individualistic, more desiring of self-expression, and less compliant with authority figures. But they are also less likely to prefer democracy as a form of governance, probably because of propaganda, patriotic education, and growing political dysfunction in many democracies. Fundamentally, however, the study of generations cannot fully explain how an individual will respond to their times. Many people assumed that Xi's personal traumas during the Cultural Revolution and his professional experiences in the Reform and Opening era would make him a relatively liberal leader. They were wrong.

Economic policy is more fertile ground for anyone wishing to depart from Xi's legacy. Even senior policymakers today know that China's economy is facing unprecedented challenges, and Xi's preferences for security and control are affecting its performance.

After Xi, an elite consensus could conceivably emerge around shifting course on the economy and moving toward more market-oriented policy settings, stronger support for the private sector, greater openness to foreign firms, and new approaches such as household stimulus packages.

Foreign policy is less likely to change than economic policy. U.S.-China strategic competition increasingly resembles something like a new Cold War, wherein both Beijing and Washington view competition with the other as a foreign policy priority. This strategic dynamic would make it politically and practically difficult for any new leader to engineer a structural rapprochement with the United States, although they may pursue détente while Beijing seeks to address domestic challenges (like the path that Xi is currently pursuing with the United States).

However, a new leader could also feel the need for a show of force to boost their political status and prove their control of the military. Torjigan shows how Deng did this by invading Vietnam in 1979; Xi arguably did something similar by leading China's response to the Diaoyu/Senkaku crisis in late 2012.

Xi's succession is unlikely to precipitate an extreme scenario like an invasion or blockade of Taiwan. But it raises the possibility of Chinese military actions, such as Sino-Indian border incursions, island reclamation in the South China Sea, or massive military exercises around Taiwan.

### Conclusion

Predicting the future is hard. *Foreign Policy* published an article in 2017 claiming that Xi had already chosen his successor: **Chen Min'er**. Seven years later, Chen is not even on the PSC. Likewise, there is little chance that we can guess the precise process and result of China's next succession.

But analyzing the history, regulations, and structure of Chinese politics suggests we can have a higher degree of confidence in some more general projections. Xi is unlikely to anoint a successor anytime soon and may never settle on a durable plan. Whether a plan exists or not, the process will probably be influenced by personal rivalries, political machinations, and the security apparatus. Policy shifts will depend on China's situation at the time.

And Xi could rule for a long time yet. He would be 84 years old at the 23rd Party Congress in 2037. If **Joe Biden** wins the U.S. presidential election in 2024, he would be 86 at the end of his second term. Deng was 87 when he embarked on his landmark Southern Tour in 1992.

What is the likely impact if Xi effectively rules for life? Politics would become progressively less stable, as other leaders maneuver against each other in case of a sudden succession crisis. Decision-making could become increasingly personalistic and volatile. Policy would probably continue to emphasize national security, adopt state-heavy solutions to economic problems, and play into strategic competition with the United States and its allies and partners.

That assessment sounds bleak, but we should also remember the possibility of change. **Julian Gewirtz** has written of the need to avoid "historical determinism" about China's future.

The uncertainties highlighted here underscore the dangers of assuming that China will always be like it is today.

After all, history is driven by a combination of individual leaders, institutional structures, economic constraints, social pressures, and international relations, all of which interact in ways that are fundamentally dynamic and difficult to foresee. Xi's legacy may endure with minor tweaks. Or China could see even stronger militarism, instability, and repression under its next leader. But there is also a chance that a new general secretary will move the Party toward more tolerant politics and more open markets.

While a wide range of succession scenarios are possible, one thing is clear: all of them have enormous geopolitical implications. Given the stakes, and despite the many uncertainties, the imperative to monitor and assess Xi's succession is more powerful than ever.

**Tibet's Enduring Struggle: A Tale of Resilience and Hope**  
17 February 2024, [RTV](#)

A poignant tale of Tibet's embattled history, intertwining themes of resilience, cultural erosion, and geopolitical power play. Delve into the controversial saga of Tibetan sovereignty, spanning seven decades and leaving an indelible mark on the global conscience.

A tale of an embattled land, a story that intertwines history, politics, and human resilience. The occupation of Tibet by China is a narrative shrouded in controversy, a saga that has spanned over seven decades, leaving an indelible mark on the global conscience.

### The Sovereignty Question: Treaties and Declarations

The roots of the Tibetan conflict trace back to the early 20th century. In 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama declared Tibet's independence following the fall of the Qing dynasty. This declaration was further solidified by the Simla Convention of 1914, a tripartite treaty between Britain, Tibet, and China, which recognized Tibet as an independent state. However, China's refusal to accept the treaty's terms and the subsequent

political turmoil in China cast a shadow over Tibet's sovereignty.

Under the reign of the 13th Dalai Lama, Tibet embarked on a journey of modernization, establishing its first postal service, minting its own currency, and introducing modern education. These strides towards self-governance were met with resistance from China, culminating in the invasion of Tibet by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1951.

### **The Post-1950 Aggression: Exile, Persecution, and Erosion of Identity**

The Chinese occupation of Tibet marked a dark chapter in its history. The PLA's aggressive policies led to mass exile, with the current Dalai Lama seeking refuge in India in 1959. The ensuing decades saw the systematic erosion of Tibetan cultural identity, as China flooded the region with Chinese settlers, a move widely viewed as a strategy to Sinicize the Tibetans.

The Tibetan language, religious practices, and customs were suppressed, leading to what many term as cultural genocide. The situation escalated in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with widespread protests against Chinese rule resulting in brutal crackdowns and mass arrests.

### **The Water Factor: A Crucial Resource and its Geopolitical Implications**

The Tibetan occupation is driven by more than just the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) desire for obedience. The Tibetan Plateau, often referred to as the 'third pole' due to its numerous glaciers, is the source of several major Asian rivers, including the Yellow and Yangtze. China's massive water problems, including pollution and mismanagement, have made control of Tibetan water resources crucial for the CCP's domestic power.

Moreover, the occupation has significant geopolitical implications. By controlling the water supply to Southeast Asia, India, and Pakistan, China potentially weaponizes it against these countries. This strategic leverage has become a critical point of contention in the region's political landscape.

As we stand in 2024, the Tibetan struggle for sovereignty continues, a testament to the

resilience of a people fighting to preserve their culture and identity. The occupation of Tibet serves as a stark reminder of the complex interplay of politics, power, and resources in shaping the world's geopolitical landscape.

In the grand tapestry of human history, the Tibetan narrative is a poignant thread, a tale of resilience and hope amidst adversity. As journalists, it is our responsibility to shed light on such stories, to ensure that the voices of the oppressed are heard, and the actions of the powerful are scrutinized.

**Why Pakistan's unstable coalition won't faze China, IMF: 'everyone understands army is in charge'**

16 February 2024, [South China Morning Post](#)

Pakistan's coalition government formed after a deeply controversial election is not expected to last, analysts said, but major creditors such as China and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will stay the course on current ties despite concerns over further instability.

After the February 8 polls, the country's powerful military-led establishment herded together six political parties to form the next government – an arrangement observers say is likely to unravel long before its five-year term is up.

"There are plenty of reasons to think this government won't last long," said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Centre, a Washington-based think tank.

There is friction between the two biggest partners in the incoming coalition – the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) of three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and ex-president Asif Ali Zardari's Pakistan People's Party (PPP).

The new government would also be under intense pressure from jailed ex-leader Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, which backed independent candidates comprising the single largest grouping in the National Assembly.

Despite being imprisoned, the former cricket star could still upset the applecart by ordering



the PTI to boycott parliament, or by confronting the new government and its military overseers with violent public protests against reportedly widespread electoral fraud.

Few Pakistani governments have served out their full terms and no prime minister ever has. Honeymoons have often given way to “ugly divorces” between the civilian and military leaderships, Kugelman noted.

Additionally, the new multiparty coalition will be “unwieldy and weak, and led by parties that don’t get along”.

“This could all doom it to failure,” he warned.

However, Kugelman said while Pakistan needed renewed, multi-year financial help from the IMF to prevent it from defaulting on its international debt and trade payments – like Sri Lanka did in 2022 – the prospects for a new deal “won’t be damaged by the election controversies” as long as the Washington-based lender “believes Islamabad is committed to seeing through economic reforms”.

During the new coalition’s first few weeks in power, the civilian and military leaderships are “likely to be of one mind in supporting reforms, though for political reasons, [it] may drag its feet and resist new austerity measures”.

For both political and economic reasons, the government and military will have a “strong incentive” to “ensure unrest over widespread electoral fraud is limited”, Kugelman said.

According to veteran Pakistani political journalist Nusrat Javed, the leaders of the PML-N and PPP only agreed to join hands under duress from the military establishment.

“They were given an ultimatum to either agree on a candidate for prime minister by Wednesday or have one foisted upon them,” he said in a recent television appearance.

Late on Tuesday, they chose deputy PML-N leader Shehbaz Sharif, who led a similar coalition government that replaced Khan’s PTI administration after a vote of no-confidence in April 2022 and held office until last October.

“In the end, Pakistan’s establishment got exactly what it wanted: a weak coalition led by

the military’s preferred parties, and susceptible to the military’s influence,” Kugelman said.

If Shehbaz does head the next Pakistani government, “that could give it a lifeline”, given that he historically has had good relations with the military, Kugelman added. But a pliant leader “may not be enough” to ensure the government’s survival, according to Kugelman, especially if the coalition becomes increasingly strained.

General understanding

While concerned by the prospect of greater instability, the IMF and foreign investors are not likely to be fazed by Pakistan’s domestic political shenanigans, analysts say.

The IMF is “well aware who’s in charge, and based on what we have seen during the last six months, it appears they don’t have any issues with that set-up”, said Mattias Martinsson, chief investment officer of Tundra Fonder, a Swedish asset management firm focused on frontier and emerging markets.

“Given where we are, in terms of sentiment and valuations, I think there are very few foreign investors that were expecting anything other than what now appears to be the outcome,” he said. “Everyone understands that the army is in charge. Whoever formally represents them carries less significance.”

Financial markets are “cynical, and reward stability and predictability”. It appears the market has “got that in some form, thus I expect an improvement from here”, albeit from extremely low levels, Martinsson added.

The Pakistani military’s stern oversight will also be reassuring to the country’s other major creditors China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), analysts said.

Although greatly concerned by the legitimacy and longevity of the new Pakistani government, they are expected to continue supporting it with financial assistance and through strategic investments.

China “wants a strong, cohesive and stable Pakistan which can best partner with it as a reliable ally in South Asia”, said Mustafa Hyder, executive director of the Pakistan-China Institute in Islamabad.

“A Pakistan with fault lines is a Pakistan that China would definitely be concerned about” because it would mean further inconsistency of policies and instability.

“It would mean a not-as-robust partnership because of Pakistan’s potentially fractured domestic body-politic,” Hyder said.

But he added that “the question mark” about the sustainability and longevity of the incoming government “should not impede China’s perspective on supporting Pakistan”, financially or otherwise, because its relationship “is with the state of Pakistan”.

Irrespective of whichever government is in Islamabad, there “is a clear consensus” in Pakistan, both in the civil and in the military leadership, “on our relationship with China”, according to Hyder.

This special relationship is expected to persuade Beijing “to be forthcoming about reinvigorating” the multibillion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), an envisioned US\$60 billion programme of President Xi Jinping’s Belt and Road Initiative. China has financed and built about US\$28 billion of mostly power generation and infrastructure projects under CPEC since 2016. They were instrumental in overcoming Pakistan’s massive power shortages and improving overland connectivity between the Chinese-operated port of Gwadar on Pakistan’s western Indian Ocean coast and the Xinjiang region.

Hyder said Beijing would be encouraged by the expected reappointment as prime minister of Shahbaz, who “has been a force-multiplier for CPEC” since the programme was launched.

#### Concerns in the Middle East

Like China, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are “undoubtedly somewhat unnerved by the tumultuous and controversial election with its dubious results”, said Hussein Ibish, a senior resident scholar of the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington.

The disputed Pakistan election result “leaves too much room for instability” among Pakistan’s civilian political class and

government “for the tastes of its stability and security-minded Gulf Arab allies”.

Pakistan has long-standing agreements with Saudi Arabia and several of its neighbours to militarily intervene if its territorial integrity were to be endangered by any foreign power. Ibish said the Gulf monarchies were “highly supportive” of the regional and global status quo, and “do not welcome unrest, particularly in a vital nuclear power” in the Indian Ocean basin, which was also a leading trade partner for them.

Pakistan and India possess formidable nuclear arsenals of similar size.

But anxiety about Pakistani politics “is nothing new” to the Gulf Arab states, he said.

Instead, there is a sense among them that if the situation in Pakistan “really do start to go off the rails”, a return to military rule is “always a distinct possibility”.

That would “not necessarily be unwelcome” in Gulf Arab countries that prefer “stable and predictable autocrats over the chaos” produced by polarised and corrupt democratic civilian systems such as Pakistan’s, Ibish said.

So their concerns about the longevity of the incoming Sharif-led coalition government “won’t necessarily” make Riyadh and Abu Dhabi reluctant to extend further financial assistance to Islamabad, or to go ahead with planned strategic investments in Pakistan’s state-owned firms coming up for privatisation. “That the Pakistani military has served as a backstop against utter chaos, and presumably would do so again if need be, serves as a reassuring idea” that suggests investments even directly within Pakistan itself “will not be fundamentally threatened or altogether lost”, Ibish said.

Financial assistance “may be smiled upon” by the Gulf Arab states “as a way of helping to stabilise Pakistan”, which will be in their interests, he said.

“Much depends on Pakistan’s policies as well as perceived stability,” said Ibish. “If Pakistan continues to act as a largely helpful player, it can expect ongoing support at a fairly high level, at least comparable to recent levels.”

The regional impact of Pakistan’s muddled election would be modest, analysts said.

Foreign policy is in the military’s ambit so Pakistan’s approach to its neighbours after the next government comes to power will be “tethered more to what the army wants to do than to what the new civilian leadership wants to do”, according to Kugelman.

India is currently focused on its general election in May and “not at all interested” in outreach to Pakistan, no matter who leads the next government in Islamabad, he added.

Likewise, Pakistan’s border tensions with Afghanistan and Iran “won’t be impacted” by the election.

Still, the next Pakistani government will have “a major challenge on its hands” trying to manage those tensions even while dealing with severe economic stress and fending off pressure from a PTI-led opposition, Kugelman said.

#### Uyghurs Continue to Oppose “Genocide Tours” to Xinjiang 16 February 2024, [Bitter Winter](#)

I met Rushan Abbas, the founder and executive director of Campaign for Uyghurs, at the admirable International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC, where she and I were both speakers. We discussed developments in Xinjiang (which its non-Han-Chinese inhabitants prefer to call East Turkistan) and how Chinese propaganda is at work to deny the genocide that is happening there. Different kinds of “useful idiots” are mobilized internationally. Others in the West, however, are not necessarily moved by ideology. They simply found a way of making money out of a genocide.

Abbas criticized in particular the “genocide tourism” promoted by travel companies in the U.S., Europe, and Australia, denounced by two reports of the Uyghur Human Rights Projects (UHRP), published respectively in August 2023 and January 2024. While some travel companies have direct links to pro-Chinese lobbies and organizations, others do not. They are just interested in selling for significant money “unique travel experiences” to their

customers. Abbas told me that this is a subtle, yet extremely dangerous way of manipulating the Western public opinion and normalizing the genocide.



*Massimo Introvigne and Rushan Abbas at the 2024 International Religious Freedom Summit in Washington DC.*

The UHRP second report analyzes and names eighteen European travel companies from France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, in addition to another ten tour operators from the UK, the U.S., and Australia listed in the first report. There is nothing “adventurous” in the trips they propose. They are carefully monitored by the Chinese authorities, and organized in cooperation with them. Destroyed mosques and Islamic cemeteries are carefully avoided. Tourists are told that they will become familiar with the ancient Uyghur identity, with the implication that China is not repressing it. This is, however, a lie. “The Uyghur identity on display in East Turkistan,” states the first UHRP report, “is that which has been permitted by the Chinese state. What the Chinese state has left of public expressions of Uyghur identity has remained for commodification and exploitation not only by visitors on tours from overseas, but also domestic tourists. By visiting these simulacra of Uyghurness, the travel company and visitor on an organized tour are complicit in the denial of the Uyghur people to define their own identity. In addition, tourism is a primary means with which the Chinese state territorializes and securitizes East Turkistan. The tourist presence coerces Uyghurs to perform a revised version of their culture, history, and religion as the security apparatus of the state maintains this fictional depiction.”

A special scandal of the “genocide tours” is that some of them lead tourists to visit “the homes of Uyghur families,” carefully selected by the regime. These are visits, says the second UHRP report, “which families are in no position to refuse given the environment of securitization and state control. This represents a significant violation of privacy and perpetuates the surveillance programs that have been carried out in Uyghur homes. As an example, the French travel company Hasamélis, as part of its La Route de la Soie Chinoise tour, offers dinner in Turpan with a Uyghur family in their home. Other companies offering home visits include EMS Voyage [France], Shiraz Travel Tours [Italy], and Viatgi [Spain].”

Taking tourists to visit “Uyghur family homes” in a context of genocide may not be so much different from a travel agency who would have offered tours to Nazi Germany to visit the homes of more or less genuine Jewish families, which would have assured the naive visitors that all was well for the Jews there.



Cover of the first UHRP report.

“By bringing tourists to East Turkistan, these travel companies are implicitly supporting the normalization of genocidal Chinese government policies aimed at eradicating the Uyghur identity, further denying the Uyghur people the ability to define ‘Uyghurness’ for themselves,” the UHRP concludes. “UHRP is clear in its message: we are urging international travel companies in North America, Europe, and Australia to cease profiteering from genocide. We do not advocate for a ban on [individual] travel to East Turkistan, leaving the decision to visit the region to the conscience of the individual traveler. We recommend travel companies and trade associations call for an end to tours to

East Turkistan and to increase due diligence processes and human rights compliance in line with international standards. Travel companies have the opportunity to turn from selling ‘Genocide Tours’ to becoming Uyghur allies through publicly canceling tours and condemning China’s crimes against humanity.”

Explained: China’s ‘Xiaokang’ border defence villages along the LAC, now being occupied

15 February 2024, [The Indian Express](#)

The Chinese people have started occupying several of the country’s model ‘Xiaokang’ border defence villages, along its border with India’s northeastern region.

Since 2019, China has been building villages along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), which separates India and China, but they were unoccupied until a few months ago.

Some villages along the LAC, and opposite the Lohit Valley and the Tawang sector of Arunachal Pradesh, are now being occupied by residents, *The Indian Express* has learnt from officials.

### What are these Xiaokang border defence villages?

China has been constructing 628 such Xiaokang or “well-off villages” along India’s borders with the Tibet Autonomous Region for over five years now. These have been constructed all along the LAC, including the Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh borders.

The structures include mostly double-storey, large and spacious buildings. The construction for most of these planned villages has already been completed, as per officials.

The exact purposes of these villages have remained unclear, but they were understood to be dual-use infrastructure — can be used both for civil and military purposes — and have thus been a concern from a defence perspective. The strategic community looks at it as a way to assert Chinese claims over certain areas along the LAC.

Notably, the exact extent of the LAC has been a source of contention between the two countries for years. India considers it to be



3,488 km long, while China says it is around 2,000 km.

### **Has any law been introduced concerning these villages?**

A new law on China's land borders was brought into effect from January 1, 2022. The law was passed in 2021 by the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress (which is China's rubber-stamp Parliament), for the "protection and exploitation of the country's land border areas".

China's official news agency Xinhua stated: "The law also stipulates that the state shall take measures to strengthen border defense, support economic and social development as well as opening-up in border areas, improve public services and infrastructure in such areas, encourage and support people's life and work there, and promote coordination between border defense and social, economic development in border areas".

Thus, this border law covers the border defence villages programme.

### **How is India responding to it?**

The Indian government announced the Vibrant Villages Programme in 2022 to develop its border villages into modern villages with all amenities and as tourist attractions. The programme builds on the existing Border Area Development Programme (BADP) under the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.

Under the programme, India plans to develop 663 border villages into modern villages in the first phase. Of them, at least 17 such border villages along the borders with China in Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, have been selected for development as a pilot project.

In Arunachal Pradesh, villages in the eastern part of the state and the Tawang region have been identified such as Zemithang, Taksing, Chayang Tajo, Tuting and Kibithu.

### **What other infrastructure is being developed by China along India's northeast?**

China has been constantly building infrastructure all along the LAC, including in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang region and the Siang Valley.

This includes the construction of new roads and bridges to improve connectivity through the passes. China has also been constructing houses and other infrastructure in Bhutanese territory.

India has also focused on strengthening its border infrastructure and improving forward connectivity with the construction of new roads, bridges, and helipads. There has also been a push to develop alternate routes to the LAC and improve inter-valley connectivity in the northeast.

### **Why China Isn't Blowing Up Over the Deaths of Fishermen That Taiwanese Forces Chased Away**

15 February 2024, [Time](#)

Two Chinese fishermen drowned off the coast of Kinmen, a group of islands that sit just six miles from mainland China, after being chased by Taiwanese maritime forces on Wednesday—marking what Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration says is the first of its actions to have caused deaths. But China's response to the tragedy, which some suggested could be used to escalate tensions already simmering around the island's sovereignty, has been uncharacteristically restrained.

A Taiwanese coast guard statement Wednesday said the unnamed, mainland-China-registered boat had crossed a maritime border and failed to stop for inspection, instead speeding away from its patrol. The fishing boat capsized during the pursuit and four of its crew members fell into the sea, two of whom were rescued while the other two lost consciousness and died.

China was not happy. Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council in Beijing, condemned Taiwan for "such a vicious incident," which also, China noted, happened during Lunar New Year celebrations. Zhu blamed Taiwan's Democratic People's Party—which is pro-independence and recently won another presidential term leading the island—alleging that its officials have long mistreated fishermen from the mainland and forcefully



and dangerously seized mainland fishing boats, a pattern it claims led to the recent deaths.

“We warn the relevant parties in Taiwan to respect the historical fact that fishermen from both sides of the Taiwan Strait operate in the traditional fishing areas of the Taiwan Strait and ensure the personal safety of mainland fishermen, effectively preventing the recurrence of such incidents,” said Zhu.

Taiwan’s coast guard said that fishing boats, such as the one in question this week, that have “no name, no ship certificate, and no ship registration” are “a common concern of cross-strait collaborative law enforcement,” Taiwan’s government-owned Central News Agency reported.

“We deeply regret that the mainland crew refused to cooperate with our law enforcement work and this unfortunate incident occurred,” Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council said in a statement on Thursday.

The deaths sparked outrage among the Chinese public. On Weibo, posts about the incident have garnered over 50 million views. In particular, some social media users are taking the chance to air nationalist sentiments, calling for retaliation against Taiwan, which Chinese authorities have long claimed—sometimes with threats of violence—as part of China.

“This is blatant provocation,” one Weibo user wrote, in a post that has garnered over 1,500 likes. “If it’s not possible to attack Taiwan now, it’s not difficult to severely punish Taiwan’s for its evil deeds, given our current strength.”

China’s official reaction, however, has been relatively “muted” considering the incident concerns Taiwan, Benjamin Ho, coordinator of the China Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, tells TIME. And despite the clamor, he says, China is unlikely to escalate the matter.

Chin-Hao Huang, author of *Power and Restraint in China’s Rise* and associate professor of political science at the National University of Singapore, tells TIME that one reason why China’s response has been somewhat tempered may be due to a “tacit

recognition” of the illegal actions of the fishing boat.

“In terms of legality, it is clear who’s in the wrong here—who actually trespassed and operated a vessel without the proper registration,” he says. “There’s an understanding and recognition too, from the Chinese side, that you can’t really press this case further because there’s no legal grounding for them to issue a tough and harsh statement.”

Ho also cautions that fishermen casualties would not rank high in China’s priorities. “It’s probably not going to rank as heavily as if a Chinese jet would be shot down, or even a drone,” he says.

Taiwan has a history of apprehending fishermen from the mainland entering its waters. In September 2023, the Taiwanese Coast Guard detained the crew of a fishing vessel spotted 16 nautical miles off Hua Islet, Taiwan’s westernmost islet. Fishing vessels and fishermen have historically been used by Chinese authorities as a way to solidify Beijing’s claims to disputed waters, especially in the South China Sea.

While the Taiwan Strait has long been home to political tensions, fatalities resulting from the ongoing territorial rows are virtually unheard of. A pair of deadly maritime disasters involving Taiwanese authorities and mainland Chinese fishermen made headlines in 1990, when a fishing boat repatriating 50 illegal Chinese immigrants back to the mainland was hit by a Taiwanese naval vessel at sea, killing 21 on board the boat; that came just weeks after 25 Chinese immigrants died of suffocation while being repatriated to mainland China, after Taiwanese authorities forced them into boat cabins that were then sealed shut.

Already strained relations between China and Taiwan were thrown into greater uncertainty after the DPP’s William Lai Ching-te won the presidency in Taiwan’s January election. While it remains too early to tell if Beijing will up its belligerence against the island it claims as its own, the level of restraint it has shown this week may offer a glimpse into a broader

strategy going forward that may prioritize diplomacy over conflict.

“In the grand scheme of things,” says Huang, “I think maybe, in Beijing’s calculations, this shouldn’t torpedo the larger effort China may have to ... encourage Taiwan to return to more functional collaboration.”

### Tibetan Legacy: Under the Dragon’s Gaze

15 February 2024, [Bharat Shakti](#)

*Tibetan history is a roller-coaster ride, with Tibet at some stages dominating the region while at others being subjected to foreign rule and even a protectorate status. Currently, it’s undergoing a focused and systematic Sinicization attempt, with Beijing bent upon ensuring that these proud people lose their identity and get absorbed in the Chinese cultural milieu. The following piece provides an insight into the Chinese design of the ongoing assimilation campaign.*

#### **At Strategic Crossroads**

Perched atop the “Roof of the World,” Tibet’s strategic significance stems from its unique geo-cultural position. Nestled between the vast emptiness of the erstwhile Soviet Union to the west and the burgeoning empires of India and China to the south and north, it has acted as a cultural sponge, absorbing and transmitting influences for millennia. This constant ebb and flow – Buddhist philosophies from India, artistic styles from China, nomadic traditions from the steppes – has woven a rich tapestry into the very fabric of Tibetan identity. Yet, its strategic allure has also brought political turmoil as empires vied for control of this critical Himalayan gateway, shaping not just its borders but also the complex interplay of cultures that defines Tibet’s enduring legacy.

#### **Glorious History**

Tibet’s history sparkles with periods of immense political, military and cultural brilliance, starting with the reign of Songtsen Gampo in the 7th century. His vision saw the unification of disparate Tibetan tribes, laying the foundation for a vast empire. Through strategic marriages and military prowess, he

extended Tibetan influence from the Caspian Sea to the borders of China, controlling the silk route and thereby establishing a golden age for Tibet. In 763, Tibetan forces briefly held sway in Xian, the capital of the great Tang Empire of China and placed an emperor of their own choice on the Chinese throne. The first ever treaty between the Chinese and Tibetans was signed in 783 which fixed the boundary between the two at the eastern edge of the present-day Gansu province.

Bon and Buddhist traditions flourished, with the latter finding its expression in the iconic Jokhang Temple and the Potala Palace, architectural wonders that continue to awe. This era also witnessed the adoption of a written script, solidifying Tibetan identity and paving the way for a literary renaissance. This golden age resonated for centuries, leaving an indelible mark on the Tibetan psyche and shaping its unique cultural identity.

#### **Mongol and the Chinese Influence**

However, Tibet could not sustain its glory beyond the 12th century due to internal power struggles and external threats that constantly marred the Tibetan landscape. In 1207, the Tibetans acquiesced to the Mongols, who subsequently appointed the Sakya head lama (later christened Dalai Lama) as their Viceroy in Lhasa. In 1279, with the establishment of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in China, Tibet became a part of the Mongolian empire and remained so for about a century. Tibet regained its independence as the Ming dynasty came to power in China. Later, the Dzungar Mongols gained ascendancy in Tibet, and it took the Chinese Qing dynasty to intervene militarily in 1718-19 to oust them.

Claiming this as a “conquest” of Tibet, the Qing placed two residents with a body of troops at Lhasa. The Dalai Lama was established in a position of full temporal power and ruled Tibet as a Qing “protectorate”. Although internally, Tibet continued to enjoy almost full autonomy as Chinese law, language, and writing systems were not applied in Tibet. This arrangement continued well into the 20th century; barring a

few hostile incidents between the Chinese and the Tibetans, the arrangement ran well.

### **A Pawn in the Great Game**

The British, who understood the strategic importance of Tibet, more so given the increasing rivalry with the Russians to exercise control over Central Asia, tried to establish diplomatic and business relations with Tibet. However, China did not allow the British overtures to succeed. The British finally launched the “Younghusband Expedition” in 1904, which resulted in directly signing a treaty with the Tibetans. This treaty was followed by the signing of the Sino-British convention in 1906 regarding the status of Tibet. The British brokered another tripartite treaty in 1914, the “Shimla Convention”, to mediate the growing dispute between China and Tibet and to define the India-Tibet border. The Chinese reluctantly joined the convention and initiated the draft but refused to sign the final version, which they refused to acknowledge to date.

The Nationalist Government of China, which succeeded the Qing Empire, also claimed sovereignty over Tibet, Mongolia, and Sinkiang. Nevertheless, Article 120 of its constitution, drafted in 1949, stated, “The self-government system of Tibet shall be safeguarded”.

As the communists came to power after defeating the nationalists, they launched an invasion to “liberate” Tibet in October 1950, forcing the Dalai Lama to succumb and sign a treaty. This treaty, signed in May 1951, also agreed to respect the status quo regarding Tibet.

### **Systematic Sinicization**

Immediately after the occupation of Tibet, the Chinese Communist Party members, government officials, and masses of Chinese immigrants started coming into Tibet. They slowly began impacting politics, religion, language and economics. The Tibetans resented this trend and caused the “Khampa Rebellion” of 1958, followed by a declaration of independence by the Tibetans, repudiating the 1951 agreement. This uprising was put down with a heavy hand, and the Dalai Lama fled to

India, ceding the political space to the communists.

The “Cultural Revolution”, like in other parts of China, had a disastrous impact on Tibet wherein thousands of ordinary people and monks were imprisoned, almost all the monasteries and temples closed or destroyed, and a system of communes introduced, which affected the very core of Tibetan society, religion, and economy.

Since then, China has been making immense effort to integrate Tibetan culture and society with that of China, thereby raising serious concerns about the erosion of Tibetan language, religion, and identity. While Tibetan remains an official language, Mandarin now dominates education and administration. Similarly, religious practices face limitations as monasteries are subject to increased surveillance.

### **Uncertain Future**

Beijing’s current stance offers little hope for concessions on Tibetan autonomy, be it administrative or religious, as promised in the past. The Chinese government, under Xi Jinping’s leadership, seems unwilling even to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama, whom all Tibetans recognise as their spiritual and temporal leader. This hardening stance has only intensified efforts to assimilate Tibet into the fabric of China.

These stark realities cast a long and uncertain shadow on the future of Tibet. Concerns loom large, particularly regarding selecting the Dalai Lama’s successor and the ongoing assimilation campaign. The coming years will be pivotal as a crucible determining whether Tibet’s rich legacy endures. Can the unwavering spirit of its people, its dedication to cultural preservation, and the steadfast support of the international community stand firm in the face of these looming uncertainties? Only time will tell.

Why China Wants to Be Asia's Only UN Security Council Member

15 February 2024, [NewsWeek](#)

China's stance on being the sole Asian representative in the United Nations Security Council has come into sharper focus following Russia's robust endorsement of India's bid for permanent membership earlier this month.

The Russian ambassador to India, Denis Alipov, has extended support to New Delhi's aspiration to the UNSC permanent seat, saying Saturday in an interview with Russian state media outlet, Russia Today: "We are of the view that India as a permanent member of the Security Council could make a significant contribution to promoting balance as well as an agenda focused on the interests of the world majority, primarily the countries of the Global South."

With Russia's backing, India's bid now faces opposition solely from China within the five permanent members group, highlighting Beijing's determination to remain the exclusive Asian power within it. But India's candidature could also face opposition from other non-permanent members of the UNSC.

This development occurs against the backdrop of heightened tensions and rivalry between China and India, both vying for leadership within the developing world. New Delhi increasingly considers Beijing a challenge to its geopolitical interests, while the former has developed close ties with Washington.

China and India have clashed over their border dispute in the Eastern Ladakh region since June 2020. The ongoing border stand-off, now in its fourth year, continues to bear down on their bilateral relationship.

India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr Subramanyam Jaishankar, said in Perth, Australia, that India will certainly achieve the target of joining the UNSC as a permanent member, India's new agency, The Press Trust of India, reported on February 10.

"We will get there. I am 100 percent certain we will get there. But I will also tell you that honestly, we will not get it easily because the world is full of competition," Jaishankar said.

The process for reforming the U.N. Security Council is stringent, requiring the support of at least nine of its 15 members and the acquiescence of all five permanent members:

Britain, China, France, Russia, and the United States.

Analysts suggest that China's opposition is rooted in its ambition to be the singular Asian representative among the council's permanent members.

Ashok Kantha, India's former ambassador to China from 2014 to 2016, told *Newsweek* that Beijing has made efforts to thwart New Delhi's candidature to the coveted UNSC while giving passive assurances.

*Newsweek* reached out to China's embassy in New Delhi for comment.

"However, in practice, we have found that China has actively obstructed any restructuring of the UNSC and our efforts run into the Great Wall of China's opposition. We have interpreted the Chinese behavior as the lack of support for the rise of India and its aspirations, notwithstanding formal assurances to the contrary," Kantha said.

"China is not inclined to share the space with another developing country and would like to preserve its status as the only non-western country that is a permanent member of the UNSC."

Kanti Bajpai, a professor and Wilmar chair of Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, told *Newsweek* that China may try to build consensus among other middle powers to stall India's quest for a UNSC seat.

"China will certainly invoke the middle powers argument. Namely, there is a range of middle powers that would not support India, Japan, and Germany, and until there is more consensus, it would be inappropriate to admit these three powers as permanent members," Bajpai said.

"Singapore is very cautious and will not break with the rest of ASEAN on this. A lot, therefore, depends on key players in ASEAN. For Singapore, that means Indonesia and Malaysia. New Delhi has not paid much attention to the region after Modi's first term and has done quite a lot of things to annoy it (including not joining RCEP)," he added.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a free trade agreement

among the nations in the Indo-Pacific, which New Delhi decided to sit out despite prolonged negotiations to join the trading bloc.

Chinese state media have said the United States' proposed reforms to the UNSC, including India's seat at the table, are driven by geopolitical interests rather than genuine calls for reforming the body.

"Japan and India are the two poles of Washington's China-targeted "Indo-Pacific" strategy, Germany is the center of Europe to deal with Russia, and Brazil is the No 1 country in the US' backyard of Latin America. It can be said that this is largely a deployment against China and Russia," an op-ed by Chinese state media outlet *China Daily* said last year.

Despite Moscow's support for New Delhi, China's opposition to India's seat is unlikely to change. The challenges to Security Council reform are manifold, including the formidable task of amending the U.N. Charter, which experts believe will be challenging to achieve.

In the broader debate over Security Council reform, various countries and regional blocs have proposed modifications to make the body more representative and regionally balanced. Nations such as Italy, Argentina, the Republic of Korea, Mexico, and Pakistan, alongside the African Union, have also expressed interest in reform plans or sought to become permanent members, according to the *China Daily* op-ed. However, these proposals have not garnered the necessary support from key players, including the United States, the publication said.

"China will certainly urge these countries to oppose Indian membership or, at the very least, it will argue that these countries are not comfortable with Indian membership and that, therefore, India does not deserve a seat," Bajpai told *Newsweek* while commenting on other countries aspiring to take up UNSC seat.

"China would also use its influence in the Global South to oppose India. India's recent loss in UNESCO to Pakistan shows that India's support in the Global South may, in any case, be shaky. China will exploit this," he added.

Why global firms are looking to exit China's Xinjiang  
15 February 2024, [Times of India](#)

China on Thursday urged companies not to be "blinded by lies" over its human rights record in Xinjiang, after German automaker Volkswagen said it was discussing the future of its activities in the troubled region.

In a statement sent to AFP, Beijing's foreign ministry said allegations of abuses in the region were "entirely a lie concocted with the aim of destabilising Xinjiang" and urged firms "to distinguish right from wrong and not be blinded by lies".

#### **Volkswagen cars blocked by US customs**

German automaker Volkswagen has said that several of its models had been refused entry into the United States, after it emerged that a Chinese-made component may have breached labour laws.

"We are working to rectify a delay in delivering certain Volkswagen Group vehicles from ports to dealers due to a customs issue," Volkswagen said in a statement. The trouble related to a "small electronic component", which was "in the process of being replaced", Volkswagen said. The part, said to be from "western China", was found to be in breach of US anti-forced labour laws, according to a report by the Financial Times.

#### **Ban on imports**

The US has banned most imports from Xinjiang, in western China, unless companies offer verifiable proof that production did not involve forced labour. Rights campaigners have for years accused Beijing of a brutal crackdown against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, including through forced labour and detention camps. Beijing denies the allegations of abuse. The issue of forced labour is acutely sensitive for Volkswagen, which has long been plagued by questions over its factory in the region, operated by its local partner SAIC. Xinjiang is home to numerous factories that



supply multinational companies, including big-name Western brands.

How America is failing to break up with China  
13 February 2024, [The Hindustan Times](#)

WHEN IT COMES to tracing the geography of global supply chains, few companies provide a better map than Foxconn, the world's largest contract manufacturer. This year the Taiwanese giant has built or expanded factories in India, Mexico, Thailand and Vietnam. The Chinese production sites once loved by Western companies are firmly out of fashion. Sourcing relations between the governments in Washington and Beijing have made businesses increasingly fretful about geopolitical risks. As a consequence, in the first half of the year, America traded more with Mexico and Canada than it did with China for the first time in almost two decades. The map of global trade is being redrawn.

At first glance, this is almost exactly as desired by America's policymakers. Under first Donald Trump and then Joe Biden, officials have put in place an array of tariffs, rules and subsidies. The latest arrived on August 9th: an executive order introducing screening for outbound investment, and banning some investment into Chinese quantum computing, artificial-intelligence projects and advanced chips. America wants to weaken China's grip on sensitive industries and, in a motivation that mostly goes unspoken, prepare for a possible invasion of Taiwan by its adversary. This attempt to "de-risk" trade with China is the cornerstone of the White House's foreign policy. Yet despite extensive efforts, and the reshaping of trade seemingly evident in headline statistics, much of the apparent de-risking is not what it appears.

Instead of being slashed, trade links between America and China are enduring—just in more tangled forms. The American government's preferred trading partners include countries such as India, Mexico, Taiwan and Vietnam, in which it hopes to spur the "friendshoring" of production to replace imports that would have

come from China. And trade with these allies is rising fast: just 51% of American imports from "low-cost" Asian countries came from China last year, down from 66% when the Trump administration's first tariffs were introduced five years ago, according to Kearney, a consultancy. The problem is that trade between America's allies and China is also rising, suggesting that they are often acting as packaging hubs for what, in effect, remain Chinese goods. This flow of products means that, although America may not be buying as much directly from China as before, the two countries' economies still rely on each other.

For evidence, look at the countries that benefit from reduced direct Chinese trade with America. Research by Caroline Freund of the University of California, San Diego and co-authors investigates this dynamic. It finds that countries which had the strongest trade relationships with China in a given industry have been the greatest beneficiaries of the redirection of trade, suggesting deep Chinese supply chains still matter enormously to America. This is even truer in categories that include the advanced manufacturing products where American officials are keenest to limit China's presence. When it comes to these goods, the share of American imports arriving from China declined by 14 percentage points between 2017 and 2022, whereas those from Taiwan and Vietnam—countries that import heavily from China—gained the greatest market share. In short, Chinese activity is still vital to the production of even the most sensitive products.

Exactly how the rerouting works in practice differs across countries and industries. A few products can be sourced only in China. These include some processed rare earths and metals where Chinese companies dominate entire industries, such as the gallium used in chip production and the lithium processed for electric-vehicle batteries. Sometimes exports to America and the rest of the West from their allies are nothing more than Chinese products that have been repackaged to avoid tariffs. Most often, though, inputs are simply

mechanical or electrical parts that could be found elsewhere at greater cost by an assiduous importer, but are cheaper and more plentiful in China.

### **Pass the parcel**

All three types of phoney decoupling can be found in China's backyard. The latest official data, published in 2018, concerning exports by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), a regional club, show that 7% by value were actually attributable to some form of production in China—a figure that is probably an underestimate, given how difficult it is to disentangle trade. Fresher data suggest that China has only grown in importance since then. The country has increased its share of exports to the bloc in 69 of 97 product categories monitored by ASEAN. Electronic exports, the largest category, which covers everything from batteries and industrial furnaces to hair clippers, have exploded. In the first six months of the year, Chinese sales of these goods in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam rose to \$49bn, up by 80% compared with five years ago. There is a similar pattern in foreign direct investment, where Chinese spending in crucial Southeast Asian countries has overtaken America's.

Factories farther afield are also humming with Chinese activity, perhaps most notably in the car industry. In Mexico the National Association of Autopart Makers, a lobby group, has reported that last year 40% of nearshoring investment came from sites moving to the country from China. A rich supply of intermediate goods is duly following. In the past year, Chinese companies exported \$300m a month in parts to Mexico, more than twice the amount they managed five years ago. In central and eastern Europe, where the car industry has boomed in recent years, phoney decoupling is even more conspicuous. In 2018 China provided just 3% of automotive parts brought into the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and Romania. Since then, Chinese imports have surged, thanks to the rapid adoption of electric vehicles, where the country increasingly dominates

production. China now provides 10% of all car parts imported into central and eastern Europe, more than any other country outside the EU.

Tighter trade links between America's allies and China are the paradoxical result of America's desire for weaker ones. Firms panicked by worsening relations across the Pacific are pursuing "China plus one" strategies, keeping some production in the world's second-largest economy, while moving the rest to countries, such as Vietnam, that are friendlier to Uncle Sam. Yet American demand for final products from allies also boosts demand for Chinese intermediate inputs, and produces incentives for Chinese firms to operate and export from alternative places. Although Apple, the world's largest company by market capitalisation, has moved production outside China in recent years, this comes with a caveat: much of the production still relies on Chinese companies. The tech giant lists 25 producers in Vietnam on its official suppliers list. Nine are from mainland China.

Tighter trade links between America's allies and China are the paradoxical result of America's desire for weaker ones. Firms panicked by worsening relations across the Pacific are pursuing "China plus one" strategies, keeping some production in the world's second-largest economy, while moving the rest to countries, such as Vietnam, that are friendlier to Uncle Sam. Yet American demand for final products from allies also boosts demand for Chinese intermediate inputs, and produces incentives for Chinese firms to operate and export from alternative places. Although Apple, the world's largest company by market capitalisation, has moved production outside China in recent years, this comes with a caveat: much of the production still relies on Chinese companies. The tech giant lists 25 producers in Vietnam on its official suppliers list. Nine are from mainland China.

Given that most countries are desperate for the investment and employment that trade brings,

America has been unable to convince its allies to reduce China's role in their supply chains. Many are content to play both sides—receiving Chinese investment and intermediate goods, and exporting finished products to America and the rest of the West. Ironically, then, the process driving America and China apart in trade and investment may actually be forging stronger financial and commercial connections between China and America's allies. Needless to say, that is not what President Biden had in mind.

Correction (February 8th 2024): The chart in this article has been updated to show the correct value for India.

China Pulls Taliban Out Of Isolation; Beijing Eyes Afghanistan's Mines To Dominate Smartphone, EV Market?

13 February 2024, [The EurAsian Times](#)

*A report in India's News18 on December 23, 2022, published an interesting news: China needs Afghanistan's lithium and copper mines to dominate the supply chains of components needed to make electric vehicle batteries and smartphones.*

A week before that news was broken, Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister, had visited Kabul to meet with Taliban foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi. This was the first highest-level meeting between China and the Taliban regime after the Taliban had toppled the elected government in Kabul.

As a goodwill gesture, Wang Yi had invited Muttaqi to the third meeting of foreign ministers of Afghanistan's neighbors on March 30 and 31 in Tunxi, Anhui.

Since 2021, China has been in close touch with the Taliban and has been eyeing her lithium and copper mines. It is not only Afghanistan but the mineral deposits across the world are also what China has been looking for, the *Financial Times* reported,

The paper adds, "The meeting will possibly begin with the investment of the Chinese into mines in Afghanistan," as stated by Ahmad

Munib Rasa, a political analyst who was talking to TOLO News.

One of the world's biggest copper deposits is located at Mes Aynak, south-east of Kabul. According to the *Financial Times*, the copper deposits also came under discussion between Muttaqi and Wang Yi during their talks in Beijing.

Chinese delegations are also reported to have visited Nangarhar and Laghman provinces of Afghanistan to examine accessibility to other minerals.

### **Acceptance & Contradiction**

A quick survey of Sino-Taliban relations reveals that China had been considerate and sympathetic towards the Afghan Taliban from the day it ousted the elected government in Kabul.

Many rumors associated with Chinese expansionist designs in the Muslim-dominated countries in the Gulf and the Middle East were making rounds. These rumors intensified with the hotchpotch withdrawal of the US and NATO armed forces from Afghanistan after nearly three decades of fighting.

It appears that China has not given terrorism the extraordinary importance that countries like India, Japan, or South Korea have. When China twice vetoed the majority resolutions in the Security Council designating the Pakistani perpetrators of the Mumbai carnage, the entire world was stunned by how China openly patronized terrorism anywhere if it harmed the interests of other countries not friendly to China.

Significantly, casting aside the cloak of ambiguity, Chinese President Xi Jinping took a bold step and, on January 29, 2024, in an official ceremony, accepted the credentials of the envoy to Beijing from Taliban-governed Afghanistan.

Ambassadors from 41 countries, including Afghanistan, presented their credentials to the Chinese President in the said ceremony. In December 2023, Afghan ambassador Bilal Karimi had met Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister.

Last year, China had imposed conditions for formally recognizing the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. It had stated that before complete diplomatic relations, the Afghan Taliban must undergo reform.

Beijing had categorically said that to obtain full diplomatic recognition, the government in Kabul would need to enact political changes, enhance security, and repair ties with its neighbors. Both nations were continuing their diplomatic relations and hosting each other's diplomats at the same time.

China had also said that while Afghanistan should not be kept outside the international community, the Taliban needed to live up to the expectations of the outside world.

The curious thing is that reports of atrocities perpetrated on innocent citizens, especially the women in Afghanistan under the Taliban, are regularly pouring in. Though the Taliban had promised to show due respect to human rights and, in particular, the rights of women, this does not seem to have been translated into practice.

How then did Beijing suddenly change its resolve remains a mystery. The simple explanation is that national interest has an overwhelming weight against human rights and public commitments.

At the same time, China has repeatedly declared that it respects Afghanistan's national sovereignty and its choices. It has also said it does not meddle in Afghanistan's domestic affairs.

Non-interference assurance by China is certainly in response to the commitment made by the Taliban that they will not allow their land to be used for militancy against another country.

This is an important commitment, but how long will Beijing stick to it is difficult to say. Nevertheless, as long as the threat of Uyghur Islamic uprising in Xinjiang remains a political scenario in the Eastern part of China, she would very much welcome the Taliban, promising not to allow their land to be used for militancy in another country.

In the recent past, a rumor was making circles that some Uyghur fundamentalist youth are receiving training in terror somewhere in Nangarhar, the northeastern part of Afghanistan.

It has to be noted that one of the conditions which Beijing has stipulated for recognition of Afghanistan was that, among other things, Kabul should mend its relations with its neighbours.

As of today, Pakistan is the only neighbor of Afghanistan with which relations are soured. Imposing this condition means that China wants to take Pakistan also into the loop so that Pakistan-based jihadists desist from propagating the Islamic resurgence movement among the Pakistan-based diehard jihadist-terrorist organizations.

#### **Indo-Afghan Relations**

China has taken the lead in giving formal recognition to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Not only that, it has also said that "Afghanistan should not be kept at a distance from the international community."

This subtly points the finger towards the US and its allies, who have imposed sanctions on Afghanistan for violation of human rights. With China's recognition of Afghanistan, it is obvious that a large number of Asian and African countries would follow suit.

India is foremost among the Asian countries and also among the democracies in the world, which will have to think twice about how her close relations with the Taliban regime must be shaped.

India has age-old relations with Afghanistan. Our history, including the history of the colonial period, is intertwined with that of the Afghans. Independent India has always extended the hand of friendship to the Afghans and supported their case at all international forums.

Thousands of Afghan students are studying in technical and professional institutions in India, and many of them receive scholarships from the Government of India. India is the foremost country that has assisted Afghanistan in building vital infrastructure like roads,

buildings, bridges, dams, cinema halls, secretariat, etc.

India provides medical facilities to Afghan patients coming to India for treatment. India exported wheat to Afghanistan when there was a scarcity of food grains. India is a partner in the Chahbahar project, which will connect Chahbahar with Kabul by railway undertaken by India.

The Taliban government is conscious of India's support and friendship. Though India has not formally recognized the Taliban so far, the nature of relations that India has with the Taliban shows that the two governments have developed an understanding between them.

India was among ten regional countries that participated in a meeting of diplomatic representatives convened by the Taliban set up in Kabul on January 31. It reflects the growing engagement with a regime not officially recognized by New Delhi.

India's participation at the meeting of diplomatic representatives convened by the Taliban setup reflects the growing engagement with a regime that isn't officially recognized by New Delhi.

The Regional Cooperation Initiative meeting, which was addressed by Taliban acting foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, was also attended by diplomats from Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Indonesia. Russia was represented by its special representative for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov.

There was no official word from Indian officials on the meeting, which came days after the Indian embassy in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) invited the acting Afghan envoy, Badru'd Din Haqqani, to the Republic Day celebrations in Abu Dhabi.

Hafiz Zia Ahmad, deputy spokesman of the Taliban foreign ministry, quoted the Indian representative who attended the meeting as saying that New Delhi backs all initiatives focused on the stability of Afghanistan.

"India actively takes part in international and regional initiatives regarding Afghanistan and supports every effort leading to the stability

and the development of Afghanistan," Ahmad quoted the Indian representative as saying in a post on X.

In this background, it is logical that India also takes initiatives purporting formal recognition of Afghanistan's sovereignty. It would not be a figment of imagination to presume that Beijing's hasty step of recognizing Taliban Afghanistan could have happened because the Chinese may have gotten wind of how Afghanistan was coming closer to India.

Though the philosophy of seeking friendship with Afghanistan by the two rival giants of India is markedly dissimilar, China feels that India's heavy footfall in Afghanistan could pose a serious challenge to her B&R Initiative in this Asian region.

China 'Pushes the Boundaries' with its expanding borders  
13 February 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

Beijing: In late 2021, Chairman **Xi Jinping** famously told President **Joe Biden**, "Aggression or hegemony is not in the blood of the Chinese nation. Since the founding of the people's republic, China has never started a single war or conflict, and has never taken one inch of land from other countries." However, such a claim is demonstrably false, as China recklessly pushes forward its boundaries on land and at sea. Including Bhutan and India, along their shared rugged, mountainous frontier, China is pushing forward wherever it can to forge a fait accompli on the ground. It is doing the same with illegal territorial claims in the **South China Sea** and attempting the same in Japan's Senkaku Islands.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in the USA provided an assessment of new People's Liberation Army (PLA) infrastructure near the Indian border. It noted, "China is currently undertaking a major expansion of its infrastructure that is enhancing its ability to project military power along its western frontier" in both Tibet and Xinjiang.



The CSIS report revealed China is constructing or upgrading dozens of airports and heliports, supplemented by new roads, rail and other infrastructure that enhance PLA logistics by permitting greater quantities of troops, weapons and supplies to be shuttled closer to the frontier.

It added, "The pace of development in the region accelerated following standoffs and skirmishes between China and India along disputed portions of their border in 2017 and 2020." The 2017 reference is to the Doklam Plateau, where PLA engineers attempted to build a road. Even more serious was the outbreak of bloody violence at Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh in 2020.

In the rugged and unforgiving high-altitude terrain of Tibet and Xinjiang, airports and heliports grow exponentially in importance. They are vital for moving personnel and equipment into the area, plus they serve as launch pads for reconnaissance assets and potentially strike missions.

CSIS assessed: "The airpower buildup taking place on China's western frontier is sweeping in scale. Based on analysis of satellite imagery and other open-source material, China Power has identified 37 airports and heliports within Tibet and Xinjiang that have been newly constructed or upgraded since 2017 ... At least 22 of these are identifiable as military or dual-use facilities, or are expected to be once they are completed. The pace of this activity sped up significantly in 2020. That year alone, China began constructing seven new air facilities and initiated upgrades at seven others." Much of the construction is occurring in Tibet. All five existing dual-use airports have received new terminals, hangars, aprons and runways since 2017, while four new airports have been constructed less than 60km from the Indian border. For example, Lhuntse, Ngari-Burang and Shigatse Tingri Airports fill glaring gaps in the PLA's coverage. The dual-use Shigatse Peace Airport is the closest to Doklam, and it has received a large underground facility that has at least three entrances. CSIS added: "The PLA is also significantly

scaling up its ability to conduct helicopter-based operations through the construction of at least five new heliports in Tibet, and the upgrading of two heliports. These heliports, which are operated by PLA Army aviation units, are dotted throughout Tibet, stretching from Rutog County in the west to Nyingchi City in the east. The addition of these heliports stands to significantly enhance PLA operations in the mountainous region, since helicopters are capable of manoeuvring in ways that aeroplanes and ground equipment cannot."

As for Xinjiang, at least 15 airports have been upgraded since 2017, seven of which are military or dual-use. One example is Hotan, 240km from the Indian border. It has a new runway, additional tarmacked areas and an expanded air defense complex.

Three new airports have started construction in Xinjiang since 2019, including Tashkorgan near the border junction with Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Nonetheless, CSIS explained: "Despite the military benefits that China's investments in the region have brought, the PLA faces several notable disadvantages compared to India. Much of China's side of the border is situated on the highest portions of the Tibetan Plateau, which is often described as the 'roof of the world', owing to its high elevation. Twenty of China's airports and heliports within Xinjiang and Tibet are located more than 3,000m above sea level..."

Such altitudes present massive operational challenges for the PLA. Thin air affects the performance of aircraft taking off, which in turn requires longer runways and aircraft may not be able to carry full weapon, cargo or fuel loads. Cold and harsh weather adds its own challenges too.

Official Chinese figures reveal that Tibet's highway system grew 51 per cent from 2015-20 to a total of 11,820km. In the same period, Xinjiang's highway network grew from 17,830km to 20,920km. As well as enhancing economic development, these roads assist the PLA in moving supplies. For instance, at least eight roads stretching from the G219 highway

towards the Indian border are being constructed. The PLA would be able to use them to quickly reposition troops if another Galwan Valley confrontation occurred, for example.

Completed in 2021 and reducing travel time by eight hours, another new road connects Nyingchi to Medog County in eastern Tibet. Nyingchi hosts the headquarters of the PLA's 52nd and 53rd Combined Light Infantry Brigades, showing how critical such new routes are in spreading the influence of the PLA.

Xinjiang's rail network has grown quickly too, from 5,900km in 2015 to 7,800km in 2020. New lines help connect military bases and airports. However, Tibet's topography makes the creation of new railways very difficult, and the region boasts only 800km of tracks. Nevertheless, the first high-speed railway from Lhasa to Nyingchi opened in 2021 and, soon after it opened, it carried PLA personnel to an exercise area.

China's "salami slicing" tactics, used so successfully in the South China Sea, are a reliable indication of how China is acting in other border areas too. One victim is Bhutan, with Beijing using such tactics against it for years. Afterwards, China attempts to formalize its theft of land by engaging in negotiations, but this type of bullying has negatively impacted bilateral negotiations. China lays claim to 269km<sup>2</sup> of Bhutanese territory in Doklam in the west, 495km<sup>2</sup> of the sacred Buddhist area of the Beyul Khenpajong in the north, and 650km<sup>2</sup> of the Sakteng wildlife sanctuary in the east.

China has trespassed the Bhutan border and rapidly constructed settlements such as Gyalaphug village. Sudha Ramachandran, writing for the Jamestown Foundation think-tank in the USA, noted: "Beijing appears to be robustly altering the status quo on the ground along its border with Bhutan. Recent satellite images reveal the staggering pace at which the PRC is building townships along a river valley in Beyul Khenpajong located in territory it claims in northcentral Bhutan." Currently, the

settlement contains more than 200 structures, including roads, hydropower stations, communication facilities and military/security outposts built over the past decade. China has faced little pushback from Bhutan, exacerbated by the difficulty in accessing the area from the Bhutan side. A 1998 agreement was supposed to see both countries "refrain from taking any unilateral action to change the status quo of the boundary," but Chinese words are as cheap as the paper they are written on. The PLA is particularly enraptured with the tri-junction border at Doklam, as dominating this area would improve China's military position versus India.

Ramachandran said, "The rationale behind Beijing's land grab is not entirely clear. Unlike Doklam, which is near India and where the PRC has also pressed ahead to alter the situation on the ground through construction of roads and bunkers, control over Beyul Khenpajong would have no strategic value in the event of an India-China war." Regardless, "Parallel to changing the status quo on the ground in its favor with its infrastructure-building activity, China is keen to enhance its economic and other presence in Bhutan. This would help the PRC to create a favorable environment for itself while increasing its leverage."

When it comes to China's outrageous maritime territorial claims and bullying at sea, state media and government channels are spouting increasingly ridiculous messages. For example, the Global Times tabloid tweeted on 27 January that the China Coast Guard (CCG) had expelled "Japanese vessels near the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, which are an inherent part of China's territory, and CCG vessels carry out maritime rights protection and law enforcement activities in China's jurisdictional waters in accordance with the law. We urge the Japanese side to immediately cease all illegal activities in this area and ensure that similar incidents do not occur again."

Such statements are figments of China's imagination. Beijing has also succeeded in antagonizing the Philippines, causing Manila to

become more strenuous in its criticism of blatant Chinese interference. After Manila stated it would modernize military facilities in its northernmost province of Batanes, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin warned the Philippines to "tread carefully and don't play with fire".

Subsequently, a Philippine Department of National Defense press statement issued on 10 February sternly warned China: "The Defense Department stresses that Batanes is Philippine territory, and China has no business warning the Philippines about what it does within its own territory. China's pronouncements and acts are the main reasons for its low credibility with the Filipino people. China should refrain from engaging in provocative rhetoric and activities if it truly wants to earn the widespread trust and respect that it is trying so hard to gain but has, so far, been unable to." Chinese encroachment has caused growing resentment from countries like the Philippines and Japan, and its 2020 gambit against India in Eastern Ladakh in mid- 2020 resulted in awakening Indian ire too. China has refused to return to the April 2020 status quo in Ladakh, despite numerous talks and disengagement of troops from friction points. The PLA carved out for itself important buffer zones, largely from Indian territory and causing Delhi to lose control of areas it formerly patrolled, which is precisely how Chinese salami slicing proceeds. Once the PLA has gained a foothold, it is impossible to dislodge it.

Both China and India worked hard to strengthen their respective infrastructure after the Eastern Ladakh confrontation, and it is estimated both sides keep around 50,000 troops in Ladakh. In October 2021, China began constructing a new road and 300m- long bridge over the strategically important Pangong Lake so soldiers can move quickly to either side of the lake and areas adjacent to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Construction of a bigger and wider bridge started in 2022, which would even allow armored vehicles to cross. In a conflict, bridges are vulnerable; however, in scenarios beneath

that, bridges are an important logistical tool for the PLA.

To the west of these bridges, the PLA established what is believed to be a permanent divisional-level headquarters and garrison, just 6km from the LAC. Settled permanently from mid-2020, the camp expanded throughout 2021.

As well as revetments and a company's worth of armored vehicles, there are shelters presumably for artillery and antiaircraft systems. It functions as a node connecting troops at Pangong with the Western Theater Command headquarters. After work began in August 2021, a second radome was constructed on a mountain peak north of the lake, about 6km from the headquarters facility. Such construction efforts show that China has no intention of retreating; rather, it is deepening its foothold.

A report published last year by the Indo-Pacific Security Program of the Center for a New American Security, concluded: "While the Chinese and Indian militaries have since pulled back forces from the most contentious standoff sites where the 2020 build-up occurred and established temporary buffer zones, both sides retain high numbers of troops forward deployed along the disputed frontier, and there are several flashpoints that could erupt into another border crisis at any time ... With both China and India enhancing infrastructure and introducing new and advanced weapons systems on their sides of the disputed border, combined with forward deployments and heightened lack of trust, the chances for continued standoffs that could erupt into local or even full-blown conflict remain high."

The same is true everywhere that China is blatantly pushing forward with coercive or stealthy methods. Unless victims strenuously stick up for themselves, China is only emboldened to continue such illegal moves to enlarge its territory. In a sense, Xi was right - no, China "has never taken one inch of land from other countries" - for it has helped outside to hundreds of square miles instead. (ANI).

China Is Winning the Battle for the Red Sea, America Has Retired as World Policeman

13 February 2024, [The Heritage Foundation](#)

Hardly for the first time, remote Arab tribesmen are reshaping the world. Piratical attacks on international shipping by Yemen-based Houthi rebels have created a significant security crisis in the Red Sea. The world's largest shipping lines have been forced to suspend transit through the Red Sea and thus the Suez Canal. And with nearly a third of global container traffic typically flowing through Suez, this has seriously disrupted world trade. Yet the most enduring impact of the crisis may be on the geopolitical balance between two great powers, each many thousands of kilometres away from the scorching sands of the Arabian Peninsula: China and the United States.

As the world's largest trading nation, China has much at stake in the Red Sea. Europe is China's top trade partner, and more than 60% of that trade by value usually flows through the Suez Canal. With that route disrupted, cargo vessels are diverting around Africa's Cape of Good Hope, adding up to two weeks in additional travel time and vastly increasing shipping costs. By 25 January, the average cost of shipping a 40-foot container from Shanghai to Genoa spiked to \$6,365, an increase of 464% from two months earlier. Insurance rates have also skyrocketed. What's more, Chinese companies have in recent years poured billions of dollars' worth of investment into assets in the region, such as the 20% stake in the East Port Said container terminal of the Suez Canal that is now owned by Chinese state shipping giant COSCO. At a time when China's growth rate is already struggling, the crisis risks imposing a serious further drag on its economy. Apparently perceiving this vulnerability, Washington has tried to use it as leverage to convince Beijing to help end the crisis. China is the top economic and geopolitical backer of Iran, which in turn backs the Houthis, using them as a proxy to needle Israel, the United States and its allies. Some officials in

Washington are convinced that, if it really wanted to, Beijing could quickly pressure Tehran into ending the Houthi attacks. Biden administration officials have "repeatedly raised the matter with top Chinese officials in the past three months", according to the *Financial Times*, and U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan recently flew to Thailand to directly plead the administration's case in a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

**>>> Don't Hand China a Victory in the Pacific**

This diplomatic effort seems to have failed. Aside from a tepid public statement calling on "all relevant parties" to "ensure the safety of navigation in the Red Sea", Beijing appears to have made no move whatsoever to remedy the situation. Instead, it called on Washington to "avoid adding fuel to the fire" in the Middle East. The attacks continue.

Some in Washington are pouting. Rep. Jake Auchincloss (D-Massachusetts), for instance, slammed China in a Congressional hearing in late January for being "not only missing in action as a purported upholder of international commerce and rules, but... in fact actively undermining the potential for a peaceful resolution to this issue". This failure to intervene was just "another example of the malign and malicious attempts at global leadership from the Chinese Communist Party".

But Auchincloss and others of like mind in Washington should perhaps be careful what they wish for. For decades—indeed, arguably for the better part of two centuries—it has been the United States that has served as the world's "upholder of international commerce and rules". In fact, it was a determination to protect the flow of maritime commerce from pirates that induced the young United States into its first foreign intervention, the Barbary Wars of 1801 and 1815, and permanently forged its identity as an international actor. If the nation were truly to become and remain a merchant republic that meant that it must, as then-President Thomas Jefferson declared, "superintend the safety of our commerce"

through “the resources of our own strength and bravery in every sea”.

Two centuries later, the U.S. Navy was still operating under the slogan of “A Global Force for Good”. Which is to say that the whole image—and reality—of America as a superpower largely rests, like the British Empire before it, on its ability to secure global trade. If there is any remaining shred of the “Pax Americana” on which the whole recent era of globalization was built, this is it.

It is in this context that Washington officials ought to consider what it would mean if Beijing were to listen to their pleas and actually take over America’s role as a security provider. If the nations of the world were to begin turning to China for “global leadership” rather than the United States whenever their merchant ships were in need of protection, it would decisively mark the transition from an American century to a Chinese one, much as Britain once yielded the seas to its former colony. Washington should count itself lucky that Beijing has so far declined to try out for the role.

Meanwhile, America’s own effort to perform its old job of securing the sea lanes has proved little more than a fiasco. With the U.S. Navy severely undermanned and overstretched around the globe, it attempted to assemble “Operation Prosperity Guardian”, a multinational coalition of forces under its command meant to patrol the Red Sea. But this effort functionally collapsed almost immediately when France, Italy and Spain—all of whom Washington prematurely announced would be members—declined to participate, saying they wouldn’t accept U.S. command. No Middle Eastern countries other than Bahrain signed up either. In a throwback to yesteryear, navies are instead each going solo and escorting the vessels sailing under their own flags and titles. What we are seeing, then, is a true breakdown in the “international order”—in the sense of there being any order—that was once imposed by American power. We are returning to an older, more typical world in which there is no world policeman, and

everyone is obliged to protect their own national interests.

The Chinese are well prepared to capitalize on this situation. Although COSCO has for now also abandoned the Red Sea route, other smaller Chinese shippers have spotted commercial opportunity and leapt to fill the gap. China United Lines (CULines), for example, has rushed to start up a “Red Sea Express” service linking Saudi Arabia’s Jeddah to Chinese ports. They are able to do so because the Houthis seem to be under strict orders to try to avoid attacking China-linked vessels. Ships still running the straits into the Red Sea now regularly make sure to prominently display Chinese flags and use their satellite identification data to announce that they have Chinese owners, or even just Chinese crew members. The number of vessels transiting the area while preemptively broadcasting that they carry Chinese crew has surged from less than two per day to more than 30 in late January. Apparently this is the magic talisman to keep pirates at bay—though China’s navy has at least three warships in the area to escort its vessels, should it prove insufficient.

The reason Beijing seems so relaxed about the crisis is obvious: this is a situation in which China wins either way. Either the threat continues but shipping is safer for Chinese vessels than for others, in which case sailing under the protection of the red and gold flag may become a coveted competitive advantage, or Beijing finally tells Iran to knock it off, in which case China becomes the principal beneficiary of the security vacuum left by the United States. Both outcomes would be geopolitical coups. No wonder China is willing to accept a little short-term economic pain as the situation plays out.

Meanwhile, the crisis also provides China with a real justification for continuing to rapidly build out a “blue water” navy able to project power far from its own shores. As it happens, this is the same justification traditionally been offered by the United States: that, in the absence of security and stability, it needs the ability to protect global sea lanes and the lives



of its citizens abroad. The military base China built in Djibouti in 2016 to enable the deployment of its warships across the Indian Ocean and around the Horn of Africa now looks prudent.

This is how the “world order” has always been shaped and reshaped: by nations and empires acting abroad to protect their own interests—or progressively failing to do so while others move to fill the void. The crisis in the Red Sea is therefore both symbolically and practically meaningful. Unless the United States and its allies can get their act together, we may look back on this as a moment when a vast geopolitical shift was revealed for all to see. As for everyone else, it’s likely that the crisis will serve as a sign that the time to prepare for the harsh realities of a far more “multipolar”, less globalized world has by now well and truly arrived.

Xi Jinping's never-ending hunt for corruption in the Communist Party

12 February 2024, [BBC](#)

**As the latest phase of Xi Jinping's anti-corruption crackdown cuts through high-level banking and the elite nuclear rocket force, some have questioned when it might end.**

The short answer: it won't.

It has become a central plank of the system of governance for China's leader.

And, because the anti-corruption drive has been used to remove anyone with even the slightest hint of a tendency to divert from his way of doing things, Mr Xi is sometimes characterised as an out-of-control Stalin-like figure purging left, right and centre without good cause.

But there are those who do not see it that way. "Xi might be paranoid about high-level corruption, but his fear is not delusional," says Andrew Wedeman, head of China Studies at Georgia State University.

"The corruption he fears is certainly real. It is likely also true, of course, that Mr Xi has capitalised on the crackdown to gain political advantage".

Under Chairman Mao, the philosophy was that corruption could be controlled by fostering a love of the Party.

Then, during the Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin eras, the idea took hold that, if you gave people a better living, they'd have less motivation to act corruptly.

By the time Hu Jintao was in charge, most Chinese people had a much better life but there were those who wanted more and were prepared to use unscrupulous means to get it, again boosting fraud on a widespread scale.

Now it feels like Chairman Xi has gone all the way back to Mao's way of doing things, putting a huge emphasis on Party loyalty to fix the problem.

And it is via the Party that these campaigns are launched, with investigations revolving around alleged breaches of its own regulations. It's effectively a matter of organised politics with the Party running probes however it wants.

'People simply disappear'

It can do this because most people with high-level positions in Chinese society are Communist Party members - whether in financial institutions, sporting organisations, government departments or universities.

But once a member, you are at risk of falling foul of Party discipline charges which are at times very vague and even relate to questions of personal morality and bringing the Party into disrepute.

During this process, the teams from the feared Anti-Corruption Commission simply make people disappear.

In theory, their families are supposed to be informed before they're taken away for questioning in secret locations, but there's no guarantee this will happen.

One day you simply stop being seen in public and the next it is assumed you are being interrogated for an indefinite period, with no legal representation or outside accountability.

And, while this is supposed to be cleaning up economic interaction so it will run more smoothly, the crackdown could well be having the opposite effect.

"It's reducing incentive to be creative, entrepreneurial and risk-taking, which had been the driving force of [China's] economic growth since 1979," political scientist Lynette Ong from the University of Toronto told the BBC.

You'll hear the expression "lying flat" used a lot in the China of today. It sometimes refers to those in their 20s dropping out of the "rat race", while living at their parents' home and whiling away the hours playing video games with no great ambition in life because they can't see a positive future.

But it's also being used to describe officials in state-owned enterprises or the private sector who are just doing enough work to keep their jobs, nothing more, nothing less. They see it as too risky to stand out by pushing for innovation or appearing too ambitious.

"Xi wants officials to be clean and hardworking," says Deng Yuwen, who was once editor of the influential Communist Party newspaper *The Study Times*.

"But with Xi focussing on corruption, they'll just 'lay flat'. Mr Xi, of course, doesn't want to allow this and is demanding that they work hard lest their corruption be exposed. But the crackdown has gone on for over 10 years now and officials have become used to it. If you chase me to do work, I'll put in a bit more effort. If you stop using the whip on me, I'll just take it easy for a while and 'lay flat'".

Big money, vast bribes

But the high-profile take-downs in recent months in the finance sector are a different matter, homing in on senior executives who are accused of being very active for the wrong reasons. Among those implicated for allegedly taking vast bribes are former chairs of major banks and one time regulators. More than 100 finance sector officials have been punished over the past year.

"Too many officials have been involved in financial corruption over many decades. It's impossible to clean this up in one or two years," says Mr Deng. "Banking was the big target last year. It will also be that this year and the same for the coming year as well".

According to Prof Wedeman, "We ought to expect a lot of high-stakes corruption in the banking sector because, after all, the banks are where the big money is".

However, if banking is where the money is in China it is with the military that ultimate power resides.

The People's Liberation Army is not the country's army, it is the Party's army and it keeps it in absolute control.

So the purge of generals running the nuclear rocket force as well as that of the Defence Minister, Li Shangfu, has shown just how serious China's corruption battle has become - with unscrupulous procurement processes reportedly pushing faulty gear all the way into the nuclear arsenal.

"We're not only talking about embezzling funds or getting kickbacks, but also subpar military equipment being purchased and potentially used by the People's Liberation Army," Alex Payette, the CEO of Montreal-based geopolitics consultancy Cercius said.

Alfred Wu from Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy says corruption in the rocket force would have hit Mr Xi hard.

"He had very high hopes for the rocket force," Prof Wu told the BBC. "If I have a very strong rocket force then, in the future, if I have a war with Taiwan, it can be absolutely instrumental."

Does he think that reorganising this crucial part of the People's Liberation Army could actually delay any move to take Taiwan by force?

"Of course, of course!"

Yet analysts observing the anti-corruption crackdown in China have identified a gaping flaw in Mr Xi's approach in the form of a complete absence of any systemic changes which could tackle these problems in the long run.

"The Party, despite its efforts to develop its regulatory apparatus and discipline inspection rules, etc, has failed to curb corruption. Insofar as the Party remains the sole structure to access state resources, it cannot curb infrastructural corruption," said Prof Payette.

Some other countries have introduced genuinely independent anti-corruption bodies, increased transparency, improved the rule of law and empowered an independent media to report on corruption. China has done none of those things.

Instead, the Communist Party polices itself. What's left is a never-ending search for bad apples without a strategy to stop them going off in the first place.

In addition to this, according to Prof Wedeman, social attitudes also need to change drastically: "Reducing and controlling corruption requires not just changes in laws, regulations and oversight but deeper changes in the culture of officialdom and the socialisation of new generations for whom corruption and bending the rules are no longer standard and acceptable practices."

Mr Xi's sweeping anti-corruption drive has also potentially made some officials frightened to speak out, especially those close to him who are supposed to be giving him frank and fearless advice.

For many, this became apparent after three years of the Covid crisis, when the rest of the world had re-opened but China remained closed and heavily restricted even with the economy tanking.

"No doubt there are smart people around him," adds Prof Ong, "But his insistence on zero-Covid until massive protests broke out suggests to me that those who understand economics don't really have his ears".

Other China watchers fear Mr Xi has surrounded himself with "yes men".

"At this point, Xi is not looking for frank advice. He is looking for loyalty," says Prof Payette.

"Xi seems to have fallen prey to being constantly praised by cadres who only seek to be promoted. Looking at early Party history, he should have known that Party cadres engage in flattery to avoid being purged and gain access to the upper echelons of the Party-state apparatus."

To an extent there is a belief that all officials are corrupt (whether they be the high-level "tigers" or the "flies" on the lower rungs) and

that those who have been singled out are, for whatever reason, a threat to Mr Xi.

It is estimated that five million people have been punished in various ways during the crackdown, with some receiving warnings or fines with others getting heavy prison sentences or even the death penalty.

But rather than fostering a belief that the country is being well governed, many believe it is also trashing the Party's reputation amongst the general public.

As Professor Wedeman put it, "I suspect that more than 10 years of the crackdown and a seemingly endless parade of 'caged tigers' has most likely deepened public cynicism.

"Quite simply, if you spend a decade waging a 'life and death' battle with tigers and - 10 years into the hunt - you are bagging as many as you bagged when you started hunting, it strongly suggests you are not hunting them to extinction and might not have even significantly reduced their numbers."

[India Says It Stopped China's Attempt to Repeat 1962 Border War](#)

12 February 2024, [NewsWeek](#)

[India's](#) home-affairs minister said China tried to bring about a repeat of the 1962 war between the countries during a 2020 border conflict, but New Delhi successfully stood up to Beijing's aggression.

In a rare move, Amit Shah made the comments in Lok Sabha, India's lower house of parliament, while taking stock of New Delhi's performance during the Covid pandemic and discussing other related issues. [China](#) and India fought a bloody war in 1962 over the disputed 2,100-mile Line of Actual Control (LAC), which has since shaped the bilateral relationship between two countries with vast populations and hugely important economies.

Since 2020, the two sides have been locked in an intense [border stand-off](#) in the Eastern Ladakh region, with thousands of soldiers from both countries still stationed in the frigid

Himalayan area. The soldiers exchanged blows on June 15, 2020, when [20 Indian soldiers](#) and at least four Chinese soldiers died.

"During this period, when the COVID pandemic was raging, China showed its real face, like in 1962. We stood firmly to it and didn't lose an inch of land," Shah said in parliament on Saturday.

The U.S. increasingly considers New Delhi a bulwark against Beijing's aggressive stance against neighbors in the Indo-Pacific. The U.S. State Department recently approved the sale of 31 MQ-9 Reaper drones to India, which are likely to be deployed along the border with China to improve surveillance of the contested boundary, Reuters [reported](#) on February 1.

India is seeking a restoration of the status that existed before April 2020, when the People's Liberation Army soldiers were deployed in forward positions along the LAC.

Meanwhile, Beijing has downplayed the [ongoing tensions](#) between the countries by calling on New Delhi to look at the broader bilateral relationship while putting the current phase of border tensions aside.

"It is unwise and inappropriate for the Indian side to link the boundary issue with overall relations. This approach is against the two countries' shared interests," Col. Wu Qian, a spokesperson for China's defense ministry, recently told reporters in Beijing.

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countries' shared interests," Col. Wu Qian, a spokesperson for China's defense ministry, recently told reporters in Beijing.

India's Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) said in June 2020 that China hadn't taken any territory as the controversy over its incursion into territory held by New Delhi continues.

"Neither have they intruded into our border, nor has any post been taken over by them (China). Twenty of our jawans (soldiers) were martyred, but those who dared Bharat Mata, they were taught a lesson," Modi said, according to the *Hindustan Times* on June 19, 2020.

[China's increasing political influence in the south Pacific has sparked an international response](#)

12 February 2024, [Hindustan Times](#)

China's increasing political influence in the south Pacific has sparked an international response

Bradford (UK), Feb 12 (The Conversation) Taiwan elected Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, to be its next president on January 13. His election marks the continuation of a government that promotes an independent Taiwan.

Just two days later, the Pacific nation of Nauru severed ties with Taiwan and transferred its diplomatic allegiance to Beijing. More recently, on January 27, Tuvalu's pro-Taiwan prime minister, Kausea Natano, lost his seat in the nation's general election.

Natano's finance minister, Seve Paeniu, who is aiming for the prime ministership himself, was returned to his seat. In his campaign, Paeniu pledged to review Tuvalu's relationships with China and Taiwan. These examples indicate China's growing influence in the south Pacific, a region that the world's major powers are competing for influence over. But why is the region significant? And how are these major powers exerting their influence there?

Preventing recognition of Taiwan

Taiwan has been governed independently since 1949. But Beijing believes it should be reunited with the rest of China. It is not an option for

states to diplomatically recognise both China and Taiwan – China forces them to choose. For decades, the Chinese government has used a combination of carrots and sticks to pressure such states into transferring diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China.

China has, for example, imposed significant political, diplomatic and economic sanctions on countries that continue to formally recognise Taiwan. In 2022, China curbed imports from Lithuania to punish the country for allowing Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in the country.

But China also offers states – and their governing elites – economic and political incentives for withdrawing diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. It has, in the past, used its influence in the UN and other international organisations to block assistance or elect specific people to international positions.

Nauru's change of diplomatic position, and the political debate unfolding in Tuvalu, should be understood as part of China's longstanding effort to prevent and reduce recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state.

But they are a significant step forward for China. Nauru has a leading position in the Pacific Islands Forum – the main political decision-making body for the region – so the country's change of stance could lead to wider formal diplomatic changes in the south Pacific. China, of course, has legitimate economic and political interests in the south Pacific too. It is a vital export market for natural resources from Pacific island states and is a key source of incoming tourism. According to Chinese statistics, total trade volume between China and Pacific island states grew from USD153 million to USD 5.3 billion between 1992 and 2021.

#### Competing for influence

Nauru's decision is another diplomatic setback for Taiwan, which is now formally recognised by just 11 countries. However, this is not in itself a serious concern for the US, Australia and their allies. They all formally recognise China, while at the same time maintain close, informal links with Taiwan. Their focus is on

trying to limit the depth of Chinese political and economic influence over Pacific island states and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region. But they are a significant step forward for China. Nauru has a leading position in the Pacific Islands Forum – the main political decision-making body for the region – so the country's change of stance could lead to wider formal diplomatic changes in the south Pacific. China, of course, has legitimate economic and political interests in the south Pacific too. It is a vital export market for natural resources from Pacific island states and is a key source of incoming tourism. According to Chinese statistics, total trade volume between China and Pacific island states grew from USD153 million to USD 5.3 billion between 1992 and 2021.

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#### US strategy in the south Pacific

When president, Donald Trump launched a number of deals with Pacific islands, including Nauru, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Palau and Micronesia.

However, Trump's strategy for a "free and open Indo-Pacific" had limited success. This was not only due to his confrontational posture towards China, but also to his threatening and protectionist "America first" rhetoric.

Joe Biden's comparatively measured diplomacy has seen more success.



In 2022, the Biden administration announced its “Pacific partnership strategy”. The initiative included a commitment of US\$810 million in development aid across the Pacific island region.

And in May 2023, the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, stated that he would work with Congress to provide over USD 7.2 billion to support the region. Since then, the US has recognised the Cook Islands and Niue as independent, sovereign nations, increased its diplomatic footprint in the region and has committed strongly to work with the Pacific Islands Forum to promote a “democratic, resilient and prosperous Pacific islands region”. The shift of diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China does not mean that Pacific island nations want to reduce their ties with the west. But the US, Australia and their allies will need to invest a lot more in diplomatic, economic and security assistance if they want to counter China’s growing influence there.

[The New Regulations for Religions in Xinjiang: Part of a Wider Campaign Against Religion](#)  
08 February 2024, [Bitter Winter](#)

China’s Xinjiang Province, home to predominantly Muslim ethnic groups, will come under a new set of regulations on February 1, whose translation was published by “Bitter Winter” on January 8, significantly restricting religious expression. This move tightens government control over religious practices and is part of a wider campaign to control religion in the region. Notably, all new places of worship must now adhere to “Chinese characteristics and style,” potentially altering the architectural and cultural identity of religious sites. This legislation coincides with ongoing efforts to regulate religious gatherings and online content, raising concerns about the erosion of religious freedom in Xinjiang.

Human Rights Watch raised concerns about these regulations. The revisions aim to “Sinicize” religion in the region, aligning with President Xi Jinping’s policy since 2016 to bring religious practices and places of worship in line

with Han Chinese culture and Communist Party ideology. These new regulations seem to be an extension of national restrictions on religion implemented since 2014, further tightening control over the Uyghurs’ religious freedoms.

The Chinese government has been accused of widespread human rights abuses against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims in Xinjiang since 2017. These include mass detentions without trial, torture, disappearances, constant surveillance, religious and cultural persecution, family separations, forced labour, sexual violence, and forced sterilizations. Human Rights Watch and the UN have both concluded that these actions constitute “crimes against humanity.” While some re-education camps seem to have closed, hundreds of thousands remain imprisoned, and Uyghurs abroad struggle to contact their families. Despite international condemnation, China’s policies aimed at assimilating Uyghurs through force appear to be going through fresh rounds of intensification.

Human Rights Watch condemned these developments as an attempt to suppress Uyghur culture and force religious practices to align with Communist Party ideology. Non-compliance risks imprisonment, raising concerns about the future of religious freedom in the region.

In 2014, the authorities revised religious regulations, expanding control over Uyghurs’ online religious activities and restricting clothing deemed “extremist.” It was accompanied by the launch of the “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism,” which intensified in 2017 and resulted in horrific human rights abuses. The campaign criminalized everyday expressions of faith, punishing people for possessing digital Quran recordings or simply having a beard, effectively targeting Uyghurs based on their religious identity and cultural practices.

The new 2024 regulations in China impose significant restrictions on all religious practices and places of worship. They mandate that religions align with “core values of socialism”

and embrace the government's initiative to "Sinicize" religions, essentially making them conform to Chinese culture and Communist Party ideology (article 5). Even the architecture of religious buildings is tightly controlled, demanding they reflect "Chinese characteristics and style" (article 26). Building, expanding, or altering any place of worship now requires navigating a more complex and stricter approval process with additional conditions for even applying (articles 20, 22, and 25).



*A Buddhist temple and a Chinese-developed industrial area in Xinjiang. AI-generated elaboration of a Chinese poster.*

While controlling the external aspects of religious spaces like size and location is important under "Sinicization," Human Rights Watch warns that the policy goes deeper. It compels places of worship to scrutinize their own teachings and doctrines, searching for aspects that align with "social harmony" and goals of "contemporary China's development." This analysis must be conducted through the lens of "excellent traditional Chinese culture," essentially forcing religious beliefs to conform to the Communist Party's ideology. In effect, religious venues under "Sinicization" become tools for promoting the Party's values to the public. The new regulations effectively place religious practice under direct government supervision. A new dedicated chapter grants authorities control over what and how religion is taught. Only government-approved groups can provide religious education (article 13). Even religious schools must adhere to "Chinese characteristics," which means raising "patriotic religious talents" and interpreting scriptures

according to government guidelines (articles 14 & 15). Further restrictions limit religious establishments, requiring them to report and obtain permission for both religious training (article 18) and large gatherings (article 42). This effectively centralizes and regulates religious education under government supervision.

The new laws reach beyond mosque control, tightening its grip on the religion through the China Islamic Association. This government-sanctioned body now holds exclusive authority over organizing the Hajj pilgrimage, excluding non-member mosques and individuals. Religious leaders are tasked with promoting "patriotism" and schools must incorporate Chinese values like praising socialism and using Mandarin. Critics see this as an attempt to legitimize actions in Xinjiang, particularly towards the Uyghur minority, by presenting them as efforts to integrate Islam with Chinese identity.

The new rules also allow local Communist Party representatives or cadres in villages and neighborhoods to monitor society, particularly for religious activities deemed illegal. This includes reporting "illegal religious organizations, preachers, activities," or any religious influence on local affairs. Critics see this as increased repression, especially in regions like Xinjiang and Tibet, and point to its similarity with President Xi Jinping's "mass mobilization" approach to governance and control. This approach, often described by Chinese media as inspired by Mao Zedong's Fengqiao experience, empowers lower-level authorities to actively monitor and report on potential issues.

The Chinese government's actions in Xinjiang, including mass detention, cultural suppression, and forced labour, have been widely condemned by international rights groups and Western governments, with some even accusing them of constituting genocide. A 2022 UN report found "serious human rights violations" that might amount to crimes against humanity. While China denies any wrongdoing, claiming its policies aim to

combat extremism and terrorism, local activists fear lasting harm. As new restrictive laws come into effect, Bekzat Maksutkhan, an activist representing ethnic Kazakhs impacted by the crackdown, worries this marks the official legalization of previous repressive actions and further erosion of religious rights in the region.

China's communist government, officially atheist since its founding in 1949, has a history of controlling religion. While past laws aimed to govern religious practices, particularly in Xinjiang, new legislation represents a major shift. Experts see this not just as a demand for control, but as a push for religions to adhere to specific "Chinese characteristics and style" in architecture, customs, and even personal aspects like clothing and ceremonies. For Muslims, these regulations dictate that religion shouldn't influence cultural practices and require newly built or renovated religious sites to adopt a distinctly Chinese aesthetic.

The Chinese government exerts increasing pressure on religions they perceive as foreign, especially Islam and Christianity. While officially allowing worship in approved churches, authorities have demolished unregistered ones and removed religious symbols. Buddhism, particularly the majority Han branch, faces less scrutiny, but Tibet's Buddhist traditions are harshly suppressed. The government aims to weaken support for the Dalai Lama and assimilate Tibetans through forced assimilation campaigns and the destruction of religious sites. This "Sinicization" approach aims to sever ties between these religions and their global communities, making them subservient to the Communist Party and devoid of political influence. This strategy mirrors the treatment of Islam in Xinjiang, where authorities strive to control religious expression and promote a state-approved version of Islam.

There has been some criticism of China's highhandedness from outside, to no avail. For years, concerns have been raised about Chinese authorities altering or demolishing mosques in Xinjiang. A 2020 report

documented widespread changes, with two-thirds of mosques impacted since 2017, coinciding with a broader crackdown. Now, a 2023 report reveals this campaign has expanded beyond Xinjiang, targeting other regions under a policy called "consolidation." This involves removing traditional Islamic features like domes and minarets, replacing them with Chinese designs to achieve a more unified aesthetic. While Beijing rarely comments, state media has even praised such alterations as preserving heritage, raising questions about the true motives behind this policy.

In conclusion, China's 2024 religious regulations in Xinjiang signal an alarming intensification of Uyghur repression. The legislation, aligning with President Xi Jinping's Sinicization policy, imposes unprecedented control over religious practices, extending beyond mosques to influence education, large gatherings, and even the architecture of places of worship. The Sinicization agenda, forcibly assimilating Uyghurs into Han Chinese culture, erodes religious freedom and imposes Communist Party ideology. International condemnation and accusations of crimes against humanity seem ineffectual as China's authoritarian measures expand beyond Xinjiang, threatening not only Uyghur culture but also the global communities of various religions. The regulations starkly underscore China's unyielding commitment to subjugate religious identity under state control.

#### China and the Question of Tibet

05 February 2024, [Indian Defence Review](#)

Since China's invasion of Tibet in 1951, Beijing's propaganda machinery has been striving to maintain its precipitancy improving the legitimacy of its claims on Tibet. In the process, China has tried to wipe the Tibetan identity by replacing it with the Han Chinese identity through elimination of Tibetan icons, symbols, history, language and culture.

The Tibetan government in exile in India and its supporters around the world struggle to spread awareness on Tibet while having to counter the China set narratives.

On 25 January 2024, a hearing was held on the 'Legal Status of Tibet' by the Estonian Parliament. The hearing was chaired by MP Juku-Kalle Raid, Chair of the Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet and a member of the Foreign Affairs Commission.

There were 35 parliamentarians, journalists, academicians and Tibet supporters who were present at the hearing.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, Representative Sonam Frasi from the Office of Tibet, London, Professor Hon-Shiang Lau and Dr Michael van Walt van Praag were also present at the hearing.

Sikyong stated the historical context of Tibet and Tibet's stance for a Middle-Way Approach. He also stressed on the importance of rectification of the historical information proving Tibet's independence before its invasion by the People Republic of China (PRC). According to Prof Lau, there was sufficient and substantial evidence of Chinese Imperial records proving clearly that all the past Imperial dynasties in China, such as the Ming and Qing, considered Tibet as an independent nation and never a part of China. This was reaffirmed by Dr Michael van Walt van Praag's presentation which portrayed the perspective from a legal stance. He further explained, since the historic records from time of antiquity legitimize the Tibet's claim, it is easy to comprehend why China is persistent with its trading partner nations to declare 'Tibet as an internal issue of China'.

This would provide the necessary justification for denying Tibetan their right to self-determination.

On 29 January 2024, Sikyong Penpa visited with the members of the Latvian Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet to discuss the conditions in Tibet, international support for Tibet, and to seek a concrete action at the Latvian Parliament to acknowledge the legitimacy of Tibet.

Despite the support shown in Latvia, there was no formal statement made by the Latvian Government on PRC's human rights violations at the Universal Periodic Review on China last week.

The Tibetan delegation also visited Vilnius, Lithuania on Jan 30<sup>th</sup> 2024 to advocate Tibet's historically independent status and the threat from President Xi Jinping's Government in China.

Additionally, it is important to mention that most Baltic States, though in solidarity with Ukrainians in regards to the Ukraine-Russia war, still prefer to continue their business with Russia.

While the Tibetans strive to prove the legitimacy of their state, it is yet to be determined as to how far the Baltic States would extend their favour to Tibet when there remains a doubt in regards to their actions in regards to Ukraine with a certain inclination to China as well.

### **Chinese Subjugation of the Tibetan Snow Lion (Background)**

On March 10, 1959, thousands of Tibetan citizens assembled around the Potala Palace in Lhasa owing to the imminent threat from the communist Chinese government to abduct and assassinate their leader, Dalai Lama. It was apparent that, with the previously existing Sino-Tibetan tensions, the disgruntled feelings of the Tibetans would soon shape into a national movement.

What initially started as peaceful protests fast transformed into an uprising against the Chinese government, leading to the massacre of many Tibetans who resisted the oppression from China. Since that fateful day, March 10 has been marked as the single most important – albeit one of the most tragic days – in the history of Tibet. It is also referred to as Tibetan Martyrs' Day, honouring all those who sacrificed their lives for their nation. By 2009, there were hundreds of reports of Tibetan self-immolation in protest against Chinese occupation.

On March 11<sup>th</sup> 2023, a huge protest was organized by expatriate Tibetans in front of the

Chinese Embassy in Vienna, Austria. The demonstration consisted of more than 150 Tibetans protesting against the atrocities and human rights violations committed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Tibet, while anti-China pamphlets were also distributed.

In February 2018, China's public security bureau in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) released a notice to the public to cooperate with the government and inform the authorities of any activities pertaining to the "underworld forces". Most of the illegal activities mentioned were pertaining to a large number of cultural, traditional and informal activities related to the Tibetans. Preservation of language, dispute mediation or even initiative for environment preservation were viewed as initiatives to secretly support the Dalai Lama or an effort to mobilize a Tibetan freedom movement. All restrictions were implemented to curtail Tibetan human rights. In a notice issued by Nagchu county in TAR, a reward of 100,000 yuan (US\$ 15,600) was announced for any tip-off or information in regard to the illegal activities outlined in the notice.

#### **Cultural, linguistic and religious assimilation**

In 2022, the Chinese government demolished the 99 feet Buddhist statue of Padmasambhava. In the same year, reports of demolition of two more Buddhist statues was reported. It is understood, the action to destroy the icons and statues of Buddhism is China's ploy to stomp out anything Tibetan and infringe on their right to religious freedom.

Post the destruction of the Buddhist statues, comparisons were made between Taliban and the Chinese, who in the past were responsible for the destruction of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Buddha statues in Afghanistan.

Considering all things Tibetan were illegal by the CCP, several Tibetans by default have been considered to be in violation of Chinese law.

As a member of the UN, China has accepted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As such, its own crackdown on Uyghurs and the Tibetans displays a disregard for international law and human life. The first wave of the

Chinese repression targeted the individuals connected with demonstrations or dispelling any anti-China information. This was followed by tightened and more rigid security in various areas of TAR, where stationing CCP cadres in every village or monastery would conduct and aid further house-to-house surveillance.

In 2014, "Document 9", an internal CCP briefing paper, was circulated that stated that the civil advocates in the society were plotting to overthrow the CCP leadership. It would prove to be a threat to the political authority of the CCP. Since the circulation, CCP has found justified reasoning in introducing more addendums to the restrictions on non-governmental activities nationwide.

China's consistent effort to create cultural, linguistic and religious assimilation under Xi Jinping's "one ethnic nation" spells the demise of the Tibetan and Uyghur identities. In the process, many Tibetans, Uyghurs and other minorities are separated from their families to receive instructions in Chinese medium in state-run institutions or schools, which function as boarding schools. These institutions function primarily to integrate non-Chinese ethnicities into the dominant Han culture, thereby diminishing gradually the influence of their original identities. It is apparent that by denying the children the knowledge of their heritage, culture and language, the Chinese aim to commit cultural genocide. With no strong ties or loyalties to one's origins, regions like TAR or Xinjiang could be controlled more effectively by China, as no group would be willing or able to oppose.

UN Human rights experts have also expressed serious concern about the cases of harassment, enforced disappearances, arbitrary prosecution, and detention of lawyers, women rights activists, and human rights activists with regard to China's crackdown. This also includes China's mass surveillance in the Xinjiang region, entrenched censorship and consolidation of anti-terrorism and sedition law, which is also now applicable to Hongkong.



In 2022, on basis of the reports from the US Department of Treasury, the US announced sanctions on two Chinese officials, Wu Yingjie and Zhang Hongbo, for alleged human rights violations in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. In December 2022, the US Senate advanced the Tibet-China conflict Resolution Act, displaying its interest in resolving the Sino-Tibet conflict. The bill calls for a resolution to the conflict and has acknowledged the Tibetan right to self-determination. Senators Todd Young (Republican-Indiana) and Patrick Leahy (Democrat-Vermont) together introduced this bipartisan bill, while recognizing that CCP's motivations in the TAR were "self-serving" with failed negotiations due to CCP's refusal to cater to any Tibetan interest. The US in its resolve to support Tibet, has dissolved the so-called "Tibet Question" narrative i.e. whether Tibet was ever a part of China as claimed by the Chinese. While the American support in favour of Tibet may come as a humanitarian effort, strategically it also provides the US with the opportunity to discredit and limit the growing Chinese influence. This move was welcomed by the Dalai Lama's office of Tibet in Washington D.C.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering from the office of Central Tibetan Administration in India also viewed the decision as a positive step. The Chinese foreign ministry, in a rebuttal to the US, applied sanctions on two American citizens and called US accusations baseless and interference in Chinese internal affairs.

In June 2022, the leaders at G7, in relation to China addressed matters in regards to China's commitment to democracy in Hong Kong, calling Beijing's actions "non-transparent and market-distorting interventions" in the economy, and also conveyed their concern over the human rights violations in Tibet and Xinjiang. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also an invitee at the meeting.

While China views the 14th Dalai Lama as a separatist, India has consistently maintained its stand to honour him as an esteemed guest of India. Since 1959, India continues to be home to the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetan

exiles who struggle to fight for the homeland they left behind.

China's strategy of Sinicization of Tibet is the very reason why one would question the need for the Sinicization of entities that are already Chinese. The question remains, with the traction building against the treatment meted out by China for Tibet, will the Dragon continue its subjugation of the Snow Lion as the world continues to watch.