

# TIBET DIGEST

APRIL 2024

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



## FOUNDATION FOR NON-VIOLENT ALTERNATIVES (FNVA)

Tibetdigest is a monthly publication curated by FNVA, offering comprehensive coverage of significant developments pertaining to Tibet, Chinese politics, and Sino-Indian relations as gleaned from various open-source media outlets.

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## Summary - April Tibet Digest

In the month of April, Tibet witnessed a series of concerning events, including several documented instances of government oppression and human rights violations. From the violent suppression of peaceful protests to the tragic stories of Tibetans enduring persecution, these incidents underscore the ongoing challenges faced by Tibetans in their pursuit of justice and freedom. The month of April also saw the passing orders aimed at curtailing Tibetan Buddhist rituals associated with the Dalai Lama's passing.

This summary is limited to April news on China's policies in Tibet, developments within the exile community and the Tibetan Government-in-exile, climate and allied concerns on the Tibetan Plateau and finally CCP politics and detentions of their citizens.

Apart from the summary topics like all previous issues, this month's Digest also carries news on Military and infrastructure, China in the region, Sino-Indian relations and some pertinent commentaries and op-eds.

## China's Tibet Policy

### Detentions, Protests and Torture

Gonpo Kyi, sister of Tibetan businessman Dorjee Tashi, faced violence from Chinese authorities on April 19 for protesting for her brother's fair retrial. Documenting her injuries, she accused police of destroying evidence by confiscating her phone. Despite threats, she persists in seeking justice for Dorjee Tashi, imprisoned since 2008. In December 2023, Gonpo Kyi and her husband sued the police for mistreatment during a protest. They were detained after demanding a re-examination of Dorjee Tashi's case and access to visit him. **Allegedly, they were subjected to violence and arbitrary detention.** The couple claims they were denied medical treatment for Gonpo Kyi's injuries sustained during detention.

One year after Tenzin Dorjee's tragic death, his family from Tibet revealed the circumstances leading to his suicide. Tenzin, a respected monk from **Shelkar Monastery, was accused of studying forbidden texts by the Dalai Lama.** He endured torture and surveillance, leading to immense suffering. His parents, now dealing with the aftermath, shared their story with human rights groups on April 15, 2024.

**Armed Chinese police in Lhasa, Tibet, violently suppressed a peaceful protest by over 500 Tibetan students at Lhasa Normal School.** The students were demonstrating against the school's closure for four months and demanding to see the principal. The police brutality resulted in the deaths of over 20 students, including two who were killed on the spot and four who jumped from a building. One student who spoke out to foreign media has since disappeared, prompting fears for her safety.

Authorities are **relocating a 19th-century Tibetan Buddhist monastery in China** due to the **construction of the world's tallest 3D-printed hydropower dam, the Yangqu hydropower station on the Yellow River in Qinghai province.** Monks from the Atsok Gon Dechen Choekhorling Monastery in Dragkar county have protested the relocation, but the government has deemed the monastery and its artifacts as having little significance.

**Monks and citizens in eastern occupied Tibet faced arrests and repression as they protested against the construction of the Kamtok Hydropower project,** which threatens their communities and sacred sites. Despite risks, videos of the protests circulated, shedding light on nonviolent resistance in Tibet. These actions come

amidst a backdrop of forced resettlement and environmental degradation, raising questions about China's exploitation of Tibetan resources under the guise of climate change mitigation. Despite international advocacy efforts and solidarity protests, Tibetans continue to face repression and the threat of losing their ancestral lands and cultural heritage.

**A Tibetan monk named Pema was detained by Chinese authorities after staging a peaceful solo protest in Ngaba County, Sichuan Province.** Pema held a portrait of the Dalai Lama and shouted slogans advocating for religious freedom and the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet. He is in his 50s and serves as a primary teacher at Kirti Monastery. Pema's arrest led to increased control and restrictions in Ngaba County. Chinese authorities have intensified surveillance, deleting Pema's WeChat account and contacting individuals on his contact list.

**Arjia Rinpoche**, a prominent Buddhist teacher, highlighted ongoing human rights abuses in Tibet by China during a visit to Japan. Rinpoche addressed Japanese lawmakers, discussing China's invasion of Tibet, destruction of monasteries, and religious suppression. He emphasized the kidnapping of the recognized Panchen Lama and urged Japan to address Chinese repression in Tibet and Mongolia.

Namkyi, a 24-year-old Tibetan, endured a perilous journey from her village to India, fleeing Chinese oppression. **Imprisoned at 15 for protesting against religious restrictions, she faced abuse and labour in jail.** Now in India, she shares her story to raise awareness about Tibet's plight, advocating for human rights and justice.

**The Communist Party of China launched a campaign to educate its members on party discipline, emphasising loyalty, cleanliness, and responsibility.** The campaign, running from April to July, includes studying newly revised regulations and discussing typical violation cases. Party committees are urged to ensure thorough implementation of the education, avoiding formalities.

### Suppression of Tibetan language

In Sichuan province, **a Tibetan language teacher named Dhonyoe was expelled from Meruma Central Primary School for advocating greater use of Tibetan language**, which has been banned in favour of Mandarin since 2018. Dhonyoe's teaching license was suspended after he was accused of teaching beyond the national curriculum. Despite being respected in the community, he was expelled, leaving many students and families disappointed.

The Chinese government closed a popular Tibetan-language blog, triggering outrage among Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. The blog, called **Luktsang Palyon**, was shut down for alleged copyright infringement. Its administrator has filed an appeal for restoration, though prospects seem bleak. **Luktsang Palyon, established in 2013, was a vital source of Tibetan language and culture content.** Its closure follows a pattern of Chinese authorities cracking down on Tibetan-language platforms.

### Iron Grip on Buddhist practises and the selection of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama

China has sparked international concern by **distributing a training booklet to Tibetan monasteries**, imposing strict directives aimed at curtailing Tibetan Buddhist rituals associated with the Dalai Lama's passing. Critics view these measures as a violation of religious freedoms, as they suppress expressions of Tibetan identity and cultural heritage.

**The Lhasa Public Security Bureau in Tibet issued a regulation targeting "xie jiao," or "heterodox teachings," often translated as "cults."** Despite Tibet not being known for such activities, the document urges reporting on suspected xie jiao activities, promising rewards. This crackdown may stem from increased religious activity during the COVID-19 pandemic, including practices like Falun Gong, seen as boosting immunity. Additionally, Tibetan Buddhists honouring the legitimate Panchen Lama and Dalai Lama may face harassment. The regulation outlines reporting criteria and incentive measures, emphasizing confidentiality and verification.

## Developments in Exile

### Sikyong Penpa Tserings' international travels and engaging with officials and local Tibetan communities

**On April 28, 2024** Sikyong Penpa Tsering began a **five-nation tour with Zurich as his first stop**. He met with various Tibetan community representatives and engaged with the Tibetan community at Dietikon, emphasizing the importance of upholding the legacies of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and elder Tibetans in maintaining the Tibetan freedom struggle. **Sikyong Penpa Tsering engaged with Swiss Parliament members and officials in Bern on April 29**. Hosted by the Parliamentary Group for Tibet, he stressed the role of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, and Taiwanese in China's transformation. He urged Switzerland to reassess its China policies amid global shifts.

Sikyong **addressed the Tibetan community in Toronto** on April 6, 2024, at the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre. He credited His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama for establishing the Tibetan exiled community with a democratic institution and emphasized the ongoing struggle to resolve the Tibet-China conflict. Sikyong Penpa Tsering continued his official engagements in **North America, visiting Vermont and Boston** after Toronto and Montreal. In Vermont, he met with Senator Peter Welch and other officials, discussing Tibet's urgent situation and cultural preservation efforts. He engaged with local Tibetan youths, highlighting Tibet's historical significance. **In Boston**, Sikyong addressed local Tibetan residents, emphasizing the unique nature of the exile government and His Holiness's visionary leadership. He discussed the priorities of the 16th Kashag, strategies for enhancing administration efficiency, and the Middle Way Policy.

### Backend Sino-Tibet Dialogue

China reiterated its stance affirming that it will **only engage in dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama and not with the Tibetan Government-in-Exile**. Wang Wenbin, a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, dismissed reports of back-channel discussions, labelling the Tibetan government-in-exile as a "separatist" group. The Tibetan Government-in-Exile and China are engaging in **informal talks after a decade-long hiatus in formal dialogue**, sparked by protests in Tibet and Beijing's firm stance. The Sikyong confirmed these talks, emphasizing their informal nature and long-term outlook. Previous formal dialogues between the Dalai Lama's representatives and China yielded no concrete results.

### The Panchen Lama

The Tibetan Government-in-Exile urged India and other democracies to pressure **China to reveal the whereabouts of Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, missing for nearly 29 years**. They demand an independent investigation into his disappearance and access to him.

Ahead of the 2024 Indian Lok Sabha election, the return of the revered Buddhist figure, the 17th Karmapa, to India is a hot topic in Sikkim's political arena. **Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang accused the former ruling party, Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), of forcing the Karmapa to leave India by falsely labeling him a Chinese agent**. **The Kashag and the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile issued statements on the 37<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Panchen Lama** despite recognition by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Rinpoche and his family were abducted by Chinese authorities in 1995, and their whereabouts remain unknown. Concerns persist about his well-being and treatment. On 25 April 2024, delegates from the **Estonian Parliament and Tibet Support Group participating in the official ceremony of the 35th birthday of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Lama Gedun Choekyi Nyima** came together to hold a joint press conference at Tsuglagkhang. The delegation: Juku Kalle Raid, member of Estonian Parliament and Estonia's Foreign Affairs Commission; Jenn Polluaas, Member of Estonian Parliament and its Former Speaker; Tarmo Tamm, Member of Estonian Parliament, and Andres Herkel, Former Estonian MP and Journalist, partook in the press meeting and made an appeal to China, urging for the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Lama, while expressing their unwavering support for the cause of Tibet.

## American support to Tibet

**A bipartisan bill titled the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" has advanced in the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, moving closer to becoming law.** The bill mandates the US government to pressure China into negotiating with the Dalai Lama, his representatives, or the democratically elected exile Tibetan leadership to settle the legal status of Tibet. Senators Young and Merkley praised the committee's approval of the bipartisan **Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act**, aimed at facilitating dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama for a peaceful resolution. The Act, previously passed by the House, now awaits a Senate vote. **The US has allocated \$23 million to support Tibetan programs as part of a \$1.2 trillion government funding bill.** The funding aims to preserve Tibetan language and culture, support NGOs working with Tibetan communities, and strengthen Tibetan democracy in exile. Additionally, funds will promote Tibetan culture and language among refugees and diaspora communities, support the Central Tibetan Administration, and aid economic growth initiatives for displaced Tibetan families in India and Nepal.

## Other news from Tibet in Exile

Tibetan leader Penpa Tsering warned against the flood of cheap Chinese goods, **cautioning nations about the threat to local Indian industries.** He highlighted China's strategic trade tactics and urged restraint in engaging with their exports to the Global South. Tsering expressed concerns over China's "dumping" practices and its control over regional water resources through dam construction in Tibet.

Ethnic Tibetan travellers holding **EU passports faced extensive questioning upon entering China**, with two being deported, despite China's visa-free policy for several European countries. Thubten Gyatso, a Belgian citizen, endured an 18-hour interrogation at Shanghai's airport with his son, citing minimal provisions and constant surveillance.

**An aide to a German member of the European Parliament arrested for spying for China was not only a familiar presence in the overseas Chinese pro-democracy movement but had also organised a group visit to the Dalai Lama in India** and was well-placed to convey sensitive information to Beijing, reported the Cantonese service of rfa.org Apr 26. German citizen Guo Jian, who has since been suspended from his job as an aide to far-right Member of the European Parliament Maximilian Krah, was arrested on Apr 22 by police in Dresden. Federal prosecutors have said he was working for a Chinese intelligence agency, and that he repeatedly passed to it information on European Parliament negotiations and decisions in January. He is also accused of spying on Chinese dissidents and overseas activists in Germany.

**The "Europe for Tibet" campaign was launched in the European Parliament ahead of the June 2024 European elections.** Organized by the Office of Tibet, Brussels, and the International Campaign for Tibet, with support from other offices and advocacy groups, the campaign aims to mobilize support from MEPs, Tibet Support Groups, Tibetan Communities in Europe, and others. The campaign's website, eu4tibet.org, will serve as a platform for advocacy groups to obtain pledges of support for Tibet from candidates and question their political parties on their stance regarding Tibet.

A delegation of Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka, led by the Most Venerable Dr. Waskaduwe Mahindawansa Maha Nayaka Thero, **presented relics of the Buddha to His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Dharamshala on April 4.** The relics, which had been kept at their monastery for over a century, were offered to His Holiness as a gesture of respect and appreciation for his service to the world. The relics, originally discovered in Piprahwa and brought to Sri Lanka in 1898, hold significant historical and spiritual value.

## China Politics, detentions and other news from the PRC

In April, China has been marked by a series of significant and concerning events, reflecting internal challenges and global ramifications. From the forthcoming plenum convened by the Communist Party central committee to

address reforms to corruption charges levied against high-ranking officials such as Dong Yunhu, these developments underscore the complexities and uncertainties within China's governance.

China's Communist Party central committee **will convene a plenum in July, focusing on reforms amid domestic challenges and global complexities.** The meeting will involve all central committee members, with President Xi Jinping leading. The agenda will prioritise deepening reforms and modernizing China. The third plenum, typically held in autumn, was postponed last year.

China has charged Dong Yunhu, **a former top official responsible for Tibet-related propaganda and human rights messaging, with corruption.** Dong, who held various high-ranking positions including propaganda chief of the Tibet Autonomous Region and top legislator of Shanghai, is accused of using his power to seek benefits for others and accepting bribes. His alleged crimes date back to 1999 when he worked at the State Council Information Office. Dong, who was expelled from the Communist Party and removed from his public posts in December 2023, is the first ministerial-level official to be purged after the Communist Party reshuffle in October 2022.

A global investigation into the wealth and corruption of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership reveals their **vast riches hidden in various international locations.** Led by Senator Marco Rubio, the United States has initiated a public report on the wealth of top CCP officials. This move aims to expose the CCP's illegitimacy due to its roots in foreign ideology and its decades of tyranny and misrule. By revealing the corrupt nature of CCP leaders, efforts to delegitimise and undermine the regime can be advanced, potentially leading to its downfall.

China's Ministry of State Security (MSS) released a video for National Security Education Day, warning citizens about **the pervasive presence of foreign spies.** The video portrays a spy adopting various disguises, emphasising their ability to blend into society. It ends with a dramatic police ambush capturing the spy, highlighting public vigilance as crucial for national security. Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the MSS has increased its visibility and outreach, with posters, slogans, and social media campaigns alerting the public to potential espionage threats.

Former UN employee Emma Reilly has accused the **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) of granting "dangerous favours" to China,** alleging that this aligns with China's strategy to manipulate the UN for its own interests. Her claims, published by the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, include allegations of China bribing two UN General Assembly presidents, harassing NGO delegates, and editing a UN report on Covid-19.

**China's Ministry of State Security has intensified its propaganda campaign for National Security Education Day, aiming to increase public vigilance against perceived foreign threats.** Introduced by President Xi Jinping in 2015, the day raises awareness about safeguarding China's national security. The ministry released a video highlighting espionage cases and urging citizens to report suspicious activities, particularly those involving "hostile foreign forces" allegedly behind the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

China has announced new regulations to bolster its network of community workers, **aiming to enhance social stability and strengthen the Communist Party's long-term rule.** The initiative, outlined in a joint notice from the State Council and the party's Central Committee, mandates the establishment of a professional community worker system within five years.

Wang Yi, **a Chinese Christian pastor, was arrested along with over 100 members of his church** after publicly calling for repentance from President Xi Jinping's regime and advocating for the separation of the Church from the Communist Party. In a closed trial in December 2019, he was sentenced to nine years in prison on charges of subversion of state power and illegal business activity. His wife, Jiang Rong, was also arrested. The arrest came after Wang Yi released a declaration signed by over 400 house church pastors and leaders.

Speculation about **Premier Li Qiang's future and role in China's power structure has intensified** since the unexpected cancellation of a press conference he was scheduled to hold. Li, relatively unknown outside China, rose through the ranks with the support of Xi Jinping, starting from his tenure as Communist Party secretary in Wenzhou. Yet, whether he can navigate China's complex political and economic landscape and play a mediating role remains uncertain.

**An upcoming article by Xi Jinping**, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee and Chinese President, **emphasises prioritising the people's interests**. Set to be published in the seventh issue of the Qiushi Journal, the article compiles Xi's statements from November 2012 to December 2023.

The Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) released a report **documenting the practice of collective punishment by Chinese authorities against the families of human rights defenders**. This punitive approach extends to children, even newborns, of those critical of the government. The report highlights cases like He Fangmei, whose children were placed in psychiatric care after her imprisonment, and Wang Quanzhang's family, subjected to intense harassment. The report also mentions Peng Lifa, an activist who disappeared after criticizing President Xi Jinping and COVID-19 policies, with his family facing surveillance and isolation.

A documentary aired by China's Ministry of State Security revealed details of espionage cases, **including the execution of a scientist**, Huang Yu, in 2016 for selling state secrets. Huang, bitter over job performance, leaked classified Chinese military codes to a foreign spy agency, causing "serious harm" to national security.

Zhao Leji, chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee, met with Kim Jong Un in Pyongyang during a goodwill visit to North Korea. **Zhao emphasized the longstanding friendship between China and North Korea**, highlighting their shared history and strategic cooperation.

The Foreign Correspondents' Club of China conducted a survey revealing that while reporting conditions in **China have somewhat improved since the global pandemic, foreign journalists still face challenges such as visa issues, surveillance, and harassment**. Key concerns include difficulties in obtaining long-term visas, obstruction by authorities during assignments, and harassment in sensitive regions like Xinjiang and border areas.

China's National Space Administration and Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation **signed two memorandums of understanding aimed at cooperation in space exploration and the International Lunar Research Station**. The agreements entail establishing joint committees and working groups to enhance collaboration in space-related fields, including joint projects, scientific exchanges, personnel training, and data exchange.

**China has been accused of attempting to influence the Maldives by donating a large quantity of bottled water from Tibetan glaciers**. While the Maldives' state broadcaster reported the donation as a gesture to alleviate water shortages, some social media users speculated that it was intended for the personal use of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu.

Xu Qin, a veteran rights activist from Jiangsu province, China, has been sentenced to four years in jail for **"incitement to subvert state power."** Xu, a prominent figure in the China Rights Observer group, founded by jailed dissident Qin Yongmin, was detained in 2021 and held incommunicado. Despite concerns about her health, exacerbated by reported torture in detention, she was sentenced on March 29.

## Environment of the Tibetan Plateau

**A recent wildfire in Nyagchu county**, China's Sichuan province, devastated extensive forests known for nurturing matsutake mushrooms, an essential economic resource for the region. The fire, which erupted in March, led to the evacuation of 3,000 residents and destroyed about one-sixth of the county's matsutake output.

An **earthquake of magnitude 5.5** struck Tibet in western China on Saturday, the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ) said. The quake was at a depth of 10 km (6.2 miles), said GFZ, which initially recorded the magnitude at 5.7. China, which seized control of Tibet in 1950, calls the region Xizang.

**Recent research in Qinghai Province, a region encompassing Tibet's historical northeastern province of Amdo, has unveiled significant gold deposits totalling 43.2 tons**. This discovery, marking a breakthrough in gold exploration, is valued at over 20 billion yuan (\$2.77 billion). The findings highlight Qinghai's potential as a hub for mineral resources, particularly gold.

The Tibetan Plateau hosts the fungus *Ophiocordyceps sinensis*, **which turns caterpillars into zombies**, reminiscent of the Cordyceps fungal group portrayed in "The Last of Us." Locally known as yartsa gunbu, it's believed to possess aphrodisiac qualities and boost the immune system, though scientific evidence is lacking. Despite this, yartsa's demand is so high that it's valued more than gold in some places, such as China, where it's considered a status symbol.

Climate change is drastically affecting frozen water forms like glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalayas. **These glaciers are crucial as a freshwater source for over 2 billion people** and support various activities like agriculture and hydropower. Glacial loss is accelerating, with predictions suggesting a 10-30% mass loss by 2030 and up to 60-95% by 2080-2100 if emissions continue unchecked.

**The Chinese lithium battery industry is grappling with overcapacity and price wars, leading to factory suspensions, layoffs, and salary cuts.** Even major players besides CATL and BYD are struggling, raising doubts about their survival. The downturn began in late 2022 when new energy vehicle sales growth slowed unexpectedly. Since then, a fierce price war has ensued, reducing capacity utilization. Despite efforts, recovery seems distant as electric vehicle inventories remain high, and energy storage battery stockpiles grow. The industry faces an uncertain future, with further market consolidation likely underway.



## Gonpo Kyi assaulted again, phone holding evidence of police brutality destroyed

24 April 2024, [Phayul](#)



*Gonpo Kyi (right) and her husband Choekyong holding a sign that reads 'Dorjee Tashi is not guilty' in front of Dorjee Tashi's Yak Hotel in Lhasa (Photo/ICT)*

## CHINA'S TIBET POLICY

Gonpo Kyi, the sister of Tibetan businessman Dorjee Tashi, who was wrongly sentenced to life by Chinese authorities, faced another instance of violence at the hands of Chinese authorities on April 19. The incident occurred following her latest protest outside the Tibet Higher People's Court in Lhasa, where she reiterated her demand for a fair retrial for her brother, according to research outfit, Tibet Watch.

Gonpo Kyi, who has been actively advocating for justice for her brother, documented her injuries sustained during the altercation with the authorities. She accused the police of confiscating and subsequently destroying her phone, which contained evidence of their misconduct.

In one of the videos obtained by Tibet Watch, Gonpo Kyi denounced the authorities for their actions, stating, "You robbed my mobile phone and broke it to conceal the evidence, illegally arrested me and illegally beat me." She highlighted the recurring pattern of her arrests and assaults each time she attempted to protest peacefully for her brother's cause.

Another video showed Kyi holding a pamphlet bearing the message "Dorjee Tashi is innocent!", while expressing her frustration with the authorities' refusal to grant her brother a fair trial, asserting, "You forcefully put a black hat on a white person [Dorjee Tashi]."

Despite facing detention and threats from the authorities, Gonpo Kyi remains steadfast in her pursuit of justice for her imprisoned brother. Dorjee Tashi was arrested in 2008 on charges of loan fraud, which his family vehemently denies.

In December 2023, Gonpo Kyi and her husband, Choekyong filed a lawsuit against the police over their

ill-treatment. The duo has said that they were treated harshly during a protest outside the Higher People's Court in Lhasa.

On December 12 last year, Gonpo Kyi and Choekyong staged a sit-in outside the court, demanding a re-examination of Dorjee Tashi's case and access to visit him, a promise that they claim was previously made to them. Instead of addressing their demands, they were allegedly detained and subjected to violence by the authorities.

Gonpo Kyi spent a week in detention and became the focus of an international campaign calling for her release. In their lawsuit, the couple accused the police of arbitrary detention and physical assault. They also claim they were denied access to medical treatment for Gonpo Kyi's injuries sustained during the detention.

### Released from Arrest, Tortured Tibetan Monk Committed Suicide

22 April 2024, [Bitter Winter](#)

One year after the tragedy, the family of Tenzin Dorjee revealed what happened to the learned teacher from Shelkar Monastery. There are Tibetans who decide to die through self-immolation to protest the cultural genocide of their people. For others, suicide is not a form of protest but the consequence of torture and terror. Only on April 15, 2024, the parents of monk Tenzin Dorjee from Nubling township, Dingri county, Tibet, informed human rights organizations that their son had committed suicide last year, on May 25, 2023. A learned 50-year-old monk of Shelkar Monastery from Dingri county, Tenzin Dorjee It's the latest example of land taken by Chinese authorities in Tibet and in Tibetan-populated areas of nearby Chinese provinces for mining, farming or other use. Local officials routinely use force to subdue those who complain or protest.

Earlier this month, about 25 families were shocked when a Chinese businessman came to clear their land. They were told their land had been sold without their knowledge or any compensation.

After they protested, Chinese officials agreed to pay each family 3,000 yuan, or about US\$415, each.

The resident said that the affected families must accept the compensation without protest, and it cannot be negotiated because the amount has been decided by higher authorities.

Other residents said that those who do not comply with the government's instructions on the matter could face imprisonment.

Authorities conveyed the details of the compensation plan at a meeting on April 16, requiring at least one

representative of each of the affected families to attend.

"The people were unhappy about the compensation and rejected the low figure," said the first source, who explained that the pasture land is being dug out to clear all remaining grass.

Attendees were not allowed to bring their phones to the meeting, where authorities warned the families that it was forbidden to leak any information outside the country and reprimanded them for committing the "crime" of spreading news about the land grab and protesting it.

"They were told that internal problems can only be solved internally," a second resident said on condition of anonymity to speak freely.

"But if this information had not been widely reported, there wouldn't have been any talk of compensation, let alone the release of the four young men who were arrested and detained."

Additional reporting by Dolma Lhamo and edited by Tenzin Pema for RFA Tibetan

### China expels teacher for pushing for students to use Tibetan language

17 April 2024, Pelbar, [RFA](#)



*Tibetan language teacher Dhonyoe (C, front) is seen with students at Meruma Central Primary School in Ngaba County in southwest China's Sichuan province, in an undated photo.*

A Tibetan language teacher in China's Sichuan province was interrogated and expelled by authorities after pushing for greater use of the Tibetan language in schools — a measure that has been banned in education institutions, two sources inside Tibet told Radio Free Asia.

Dhonyoe, who goes by only one name, was expelled in early April from Meruma Central Primary School in Ngaba county's Meruma township after he was interrogated several times by Chinese authorities, said the sources who requested anonymity for fear of reprisals.

His teaching license was also suspended, they said. "Dhonyoe was accused of teaching his students beyond the national education system and was repeatedly questioned by authorities in mid-March," said the first source.

The Chinese government-run boarding school has about 500 Tibetan students, studying in kindergarten to the sixth grade, and about 60 teachers. The school previously taught Tibetan language and used Tibetan as a medium of instruction, the sources said.

However, since 2018, with the movement of promoting uniformity in the use of textbooks and instructional materials, the Tibetan language has been replaced by Mandarin, which has been taught more intensively, they added.

“Dhonyoe is a well-respected Tibetan teacher in the community,” said the second source. “He taught students the importance of the Tibetan language and Tibetan history, which is why he was expelled. Many students and their families were disappointed by his expulsion.”

Heart-warming video

A video obtained by RFA shows students running to the school gate to greet and embrace Dhonyoe after he returned from one of the interrogation sessions he was subjected to in March.

Since 2020, the Chinese government has further tightened its restrictions on language rights in Tibetan, forcing the closure of private Tibetan schools in Tibet and banning Tibetan language teaching in various schools in Tibetan-populated areas, including in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

Authorities have since intensified Chinese-language education in Tibetan schools in the name of promoting uniformity in the use of textbooks and instructional materials.

In 2021, authorities also began prohibiting Tibetan children from taking informal Tibetan language classes or workshops during their winter holidays, a move that local Tibetans and parents of affected children said would negatively impact the children’s connection to their native language.

Earlier this year, in January, the Chinese Education Department issued a notice repeating this ban and ordering local authorities to intensify their supervision and investigation of supplementary lessons for Tibetan children and carry out strict disciplinary action against those violating the rule.

*Translated by Dolma Lhamo and edited by Tenzin Pema for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.*

### Campaign Against “Cults” Launched in Lhasa— But What Is a “Cult” in Tibet?

16 April 2024, [Bitter Winter](#)

Tibet was never known as a hotbed of “xie jiao.” They may have achieved some success during the pandemic—or the CCP wants to label dissident Buddhists as “cultists.”



*The new regulation announced on Weibo.*

On April 4, the Lhasa Public Security Bureau issued a strange document on repressing “xie jiao,” a term that really means “heterodox teachings” and was originally used by Taoists in the Middle Ages to slander Buddhism, but is today translated by the CCP in languages other than Mandarin as “cults.”

The document, whose translation we offer here below, would be perfectly predictable in other areas of China where fighting groups listed as “xie jiao” such as Falun Gong and The Church of Almighty God is a national security priority. The document incites Tibetans to inform on the activities of the “xie jiao” promising monetary rewards.

But why Lhasa? Tibet is not known as a hotbed of “xie jiao,” and the problem of the authorities watching religion there is mostly to control dissident Buddhists. There are two possible explanations. One is that, as some reported to “Bitter Winter,” the comparatively limited activities of Falun Gong and Christian-derivative groups listed as “xie jiao” in Tibet increased during the COVID-19 quarantine. The lockdown was particularly strict in Lhasa and very harsh on the local population. As it happened elsewhere, many turned to religion, including to its “illegal” varieties, with Falun Gong becoming especially popular for its offer of meditative practices boosting the immune system and protecting against the virus.

A more sinister explanation, however, is the expansion of the notions of xie jiao and “cults,” which courts and public security increasingly use to crack down on groups that are not included in the semi-official lists of the xie jiao. More than one informant reported to “Bitter Winter” that Tibetans have been harassed and detained for having been found in possession of portraits of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, taken before he was kidnapped by the Chinese at age 6 in 1995. The CCP has installed Gyaincain Norbu as a false 11th Panchen Lama. “The police told me that those who honor and respect the real 11th Panchen Lama and reject the usurper Gyaincain Norbu are part of a cult,” a woman told “Bitter Winter.” Since the expression “Dalai Lama xie jiao” is also used, it is not impossible that Chinese authorities may also regard those who consider the Dalai Lama as the legitimate leader of Tibet as part of a “cult.”

**A translation of the Lhasa Public Security Bureau regulation follows:**

"In order to severely crack down on and strictly prevent illegal and criminal activities of the xie jiao and create a harmonious and stable social environment, we are now collecting clues from the public about illegal and criminal activities involving xie jiao. The details are as follows:

1. Report content

(1) Clues involving illegal gatherings and activities of xie jiao.

(2) Forcing others to join a xie jiao or preventing others from quitting a xie jiao.

(3) Xie jiao create and spread superstitious heresies to deceive members or others into not accepting normal treatment, going on a hunger strike, self-harm (self-abuse), or committing suicide.

(4) Those who organize and use xie jiao to collect money; those who produce, print, operate, and transport xie jiao propaganda materials; those who use money as a tool to promote xie jiao.

(5) Promoting xie jiao to students in schools or other training institutions, or promoting xie jiao to minors through various study classes, summer (winter) camps, etc.

(6) Personnel involved in xie jiao organizations spread reactionary remarks, post, distribute, carry, privately hide, and produce clues to counter-propaganda materials such as xie jiao anti-propaganda slogans, books, leaflets, CDs, and various materials.

(7) Use communications and the Internet to promote xie jiao doctrines, produce and disseminate electronic pictures, books, publications, audio and video that promote xie jiao, and use social media such as QQ, WeChat, Douyin, and Weibo to promote xie jiao content.

(8) Using radio stations, illegally taking advantage of radio and television broadcasts, and LED electronic screens to promote xie jiao.

(9) Using e-commerce platforms to sell, buy, or mail xie jiao materials and items.

(10) Providing funds, venues, technology, tools, food, accommodation, transportation and other conveniences or assistance for xie jiao activities.

(11) Producing, mailing, and disseminating xie jiao pictures, flyers, slogans, newspapers, books, periodicals, audio tapes, video tapes, CDs, banners, logos, signs, flags, badges, clothing, utensils, souvenirs, and other items.

(12) Playing audio and video, shouting slogans, teaching, giving speeches, writing, spraying, posting, or hanging banners, slogans, or promoting xie jiao by throwing, distributing, or displaying materials.

(13) Going to regular religious venues to lure believers into xie jiao.

(14) Clues to other illegal and criminal activities of xie jiao.

2. Reporting method

(1) Dial the police hotline 110

(2) Call the police station in your jurisdiction or go to the police station to make a verbal report

(3) Report to the community police

3. Incentive measures

If the reporting clues are verified to be true by the public security organs, they will be rewarded as appropriate. The main award criteria are:

(1) If you discover clues about xie jiao activities, report to the police in a timely manner, and actively cooperate with the public security organs in carrying out investigation work, if found to be true, you will be rewarded with RMB 100 to RMB 1,000 depending on the circumstances.

(2) If a xie jiao member is found to be posting, distributing, or delivering xie jiao counter-propaganda and other illegal activities, and he or she is directly apprehended by the public security agency, to those who assist the public security agency in directly capturing the criminal suspect, a reward of RMB 1,000 to RMB 2,000 will be given, depending on the situation.

(3) Discover and report that training institutions, information consulting companies, etc., under the pretext of 'spiritual training,' 'leadership training,' 'spiritual practice,' etc., promote xie jiao, recruit people into illegal religion, and carry out mental control through teaching, speeches, etc., if the public security organ verifies that it is true, a reward of RMB 2,000 to RMB 5,000 will be given depending on the circumstances.

(4) Those who provide information about xie jiao members that have not been identified by relevant departments, or provide information about xie jiao members' gathering places, and such members are caught on the spot by the public security organs (more than 3 people) will be rewarded depending on the level of the personnel (leaders, backbones, general personnel, etc.) from 10,000 yuan to 20,000 yuan.

(5) Provide clues to major cases or insider, early-warning, and actionable information in order to successfully detect xie-jiao-related cases (events) with significant impact or effectively prevent large-scale gatherings of xie-jiao-related personnel and travel to Beijing, provinces, and cities, etc. If the case is verified to be true by the public security organ, a reward of RMB 10,000 to RMB 30,000 will be given depending on the circumstances.

4. Report identification and non-reward situations

(1) No reward will be given if the report is made anonymously, is false, or the report information is unclear and cannot be verified.

- (2) If one person reports multiple reports, only one will be rewarded after verification.
- (3) Multiple people report the same content. After verification, the first whistleblower will be selected to be rewarded (subject to the registration time of the accepting unit).
- (4) No reward will be given if a criminal suspect surrenders before being reported.
- (5) If the public security organs, People's Procuratorates, and People's Courts discover Un investigated criminal facts before the whistleblower during the case investigation, review, and trial, the whistleblower will not be rewarded.
- (6) No reward will be given if the reported illegal and criminal acts have been already investigated and dealt with.
- (7) These measures do not apply to staff of government agencies and administrative enterprises and institutions responsible for preventing and dealing with xie jiao.

#### 5. Precautions

- (1) The whistleblower must leave his or her real name and contact information. When reporting, pay attention to methods and personal safety, and properly retain information and evidence for subsequent verification and redemption of rewards.
- (2) The reporting unit and staff will strictly keep the whistleblower's information confidential and protect the whistleblower's personal and property safety in accordance with the law.
- (3) Within 30 days from the date of receiving the reward notification, the informant must go to the designated location in the reward notification with his or her valid ID to collect the reward. Failure to collect within the time limit will be deemed as automatic abandonment.
- (4) The reporters should truthfully report the clues they know about illegal and criminal activities involving xie jiao. If, in the name of reporting, you make false accusations and frame others, fraudulently seek rewards, blackmail the person being reported, fabricate and disseminate false information, lie about reporting information, etc., the public security organs will investigate the legal responsibility of the perpetrator in accordance with the law.

### Smuggled Protest videos offer a rare glimpse at resistance in occupied Tibet

13 April 2024, [Waging NonViolence](#)



*Screenshots of videos depicting Tibetan monks and citizens protesting evictions and a hydropower dam — against a background photo of Derge and the Drichu river.*

Under the cover of darkness, the monks were evicted. Amid the freezing temperatures of late February, they knelt, prostrated and wept before a group of Chinese police officers, their sacred red robes ablaze against the black state uniforms.

In videos captured and sent out of eastern occupied Tibet — an act that in and of itself can warrant jail time — monks and citizens pleaded to protect a life-sustaining river, to preserve their ancient monasteries and to save the tight-knit communities of Derge, in the mountainous Kham region. But by day, and by night, outside of the monasteries and inside the town centers, monks, nuns and residents were arrested one by one. In the following weeks, the list of alleged crimes would run long, but on Feb. 23 more than a thousand Tibetans were arrested for protesting.

Drimey, a Tibetan in exile who has asked to be identified by his first name only, watched these videos in horror. Monks are highly respected in Tibet, but what he saw — desperate people begging on their knees — was saddening, almost denigrating, to someone from a highly reverent culture. Hailing from the town of Wongpo Tok (one of the sites of the arrests), Drimey crossed the Himalayas on foot in 1999 to pursue Tibetan and religious studies not accessible in his home under occupation. Now, he is watching from afar as his community is criminalized, his town is submerged and his religion is desecrated.

"I have known those mountains and those roads," he said through a translator. "I have known everything."

About a week before the arrests in early February, just across the mountain from Wongpo Tok, some 300 people gathered outside the Derge County Seat — home to the Chinese Communist Party's provincial office — to protest the construction of the Kamtok Hydropower project. Slated to straddle the banks of the Drichu River, the headwaters of Asia's 3,915-mile Yangtze River, the hydropower dam will not only strangle the river's winding route but forcibly displace thousands of Tibetans. According to a 2019 report from the International Campaign for Tibet, the

hydropower project is one of 25 dams set to carve through the Tibetan plateau and generate “clean” electricity.

A parallel situation is also unfolding in Amdo county where the Chinese government recently announced plans to relocate the historic Atsok Monastery and surrounding communities to make way for another large-scale hydropower project. Tibetans told Radio Free Asia that in the wake of this news, residents gathered at the monastery to pray while monk leaders were told to accept the relocation plan and promise not to protest.

“These huge dams are not for Tibetans,” said Dr. Lobsang Yangtso, the programme and environment coordinator at International Tibet Network, a global coalition of Tibet-centered organizations based in Berkeley, California. “It’s a colonial mentality where these resources are to be consumed by mainland China.”

Tibet has a long history of nonviolent resistance dating back to 1959, around 10 years after China’s occupation. Under extreme repression, the country’s monasteries have become a driving force behind nonviolent actions including peaceful demonstrations and poster campaigns that, in recent years, have become less frequent given the grave consequences. While it’s largely unknown how the February protests were organized, videos sent out of the country have offered a rare glimpse into nonviolent resistance in occupied Tibet in 2024. In video clips, Tibetans can be seen peacefully gathering, chanting and, in some instances, holding up two thumbs — a gesture that expresses an appeal for pity. In others, Tibetans are shown waving the Chinese national flag. According to Tenzin Norgay, a research analyst at International Campaign for Tibet, this was an attempt to show that they are not separatists, as they are likely to be labeled, but simply expressing their concerns and desire to be heard.

That desire for discussion is internationally known as free, prior and informed consent, or FPIC — a right enshrined in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and applicable to Tibetans. While this is an imperfect process in much of the world, China has among the highest levels of development-related displacement despite resettlement being labeled as 100 percent voluntary. In the same way that protest is silenced and information restricted under Chinese occupation, “consent” is usually achieved without consultation and through coercion. True FPIC is an “absolute luxury,” said Norgay, and there are few mechanisms through which Tibetans can voice their concern or opposition to state projects and policies.

Globally, hydropower projects from Honduras to the Philippines have been a violent frontline for environmental defenders. According to a 2019 study

drawing data from the Global Environmental Justice Atlas, resistance to hydropower projects is met with a similar pattern of violence as other extractive industries, including oil and mining. In 2009, six women in Tibet were shot during demonstrations against a hydropower project according to the Tibetan government in exile, now based in Dharamshala, India. In Derge, more recently, some of the charges enumerated by the Chinese government in the wake of these recent demonstrations include fines and imprisonment for protesting against government initiatives, distributing pamphlets and shouting slogans.

“When we think of environmental defenders, there is no more visceral scene than hundreds of Tibetans begging on their hands and knees to protect their environment knowing full well that they’re risking arrest and imprisonment,” said Topjor Tsultrim, the communications coordinator at Students for a Free Tibet, an organization that works in solidarity with the Tibetan struggle. “It’s the same issue and the same mindset as defenders in the Amazon coming up against the impossibly large forces of government or corporations.”

In Derge, as internet access became even more restricted and cell phones were confiscated, arrested Tibetans — including those who had simply enquired about their loved ones — were told to bring their own bedding and tsampa (a barley flour staple). The sheer number of arrests in a single day meant detainees could not be imprisoned in local jails but were sent across occupied Tibet and into China’s Sichuan province. Jail conditions are poor with overcrowded cells, scarce food and, in the winter, a cold that can strike to the bone. In these conditions, one-on-one interrogations are constant and physical violence — such as beatings, thrashings and, in extreme cases, torture — is used as a tactic to elicit information.

According to reports out of Tibet, several detainees were beaten so badly they required hospitalization. The goal of these interrogations is to single out the alleged organizers, Norgay said, and it’s likely officials already have. While there are no specific figures, most detainees are believed to have been released in late March, except for a village official and the administrator of the Wonto monastery.

“The Chinese authorities don’t like organizers so I’m expecting they will get around 10 years in prison, maybe even more,” he said. “They are thought of as the ringleaders who are basically revolting against the state.”

Despite the repression that followed these protests, Tibetans — both in the occupied country and in exile — know what is at risk should the hydropower project continue. The Wongpo Tok of Drimey’s memory is one of summertime wildflowers, free-flowing rivers and

peaks that stretch towards the sky. It is a place where the farmers cultivate their crops twice a year, where the nomads herd their cattle across the grasslands and where every family has more than a hundred yak and geese. Monasteries are centers of language, culture, religion and education. Lamas are venerated, mountains revered. The Driчу River is a source of life. For Drimey, the community of Wongpo Tok is pleasant, prosperous and alive. But relocation, Drimey said, will destroy the community, as well as knowledge of the land, mountains and waters passed down from one generation to the next.

“People have a strong attachment to the land,” Drimey said. “If it goes underwater, they will lose everything forever.”

For many communities across Tibet, everything has already been lost. In recent years, Chinese policies operating under the guise of “poverty alleviation” or “ecological restoration” have been leveraged to displace thousands of Tibetans from their ancestral homelands. Two years ago, more than 17,000 people were resettled nearly 250 miles from their community as part of the state’s “very high-altitude ecological relocation plan.” The policy, introduced in 2018, stipulates that by 2025, 130,000 Tibetans will have been relocated. Bused en-masse to government-constructed housing akin to “boxes,” according to Norgay, forced resettlement means the loss of traditional farming knowledge, the erasure of nomadic ways of life and the unmooring of a strongly Buddhist people from the center of their faith.

“Tibetan towns are built around monasteries,” Tsultrim said. “They are the heartbeats of the community.”

According to reports, the Kamtok Hydropower project is expected to submerge six monasteries, including Wonto, the scene of some of the arrests. These monasteries, long protected and preserved by monks and lamas, are not only the spiritual center of a community but also home to Tibetan Buddhist murals dating back to the 13th century. After China fully occupied Tibet in 1959 and throughout China’s Cultural Revolution, more than 97 percent of monasteries and nunneries were destroyed, according to the 10th Panchen Lama, writing in 1962. The destruction of these ancient monasteries is more than a cultural and religious loss — it’s another means of dismantling what it is to be Tibetan.

“For the state, a dam is an important symbol of modernity,” Norgay said. “But for local Tibetans, these cultural artifacts — monasteries and murals — signify their identity.”

At the heart of that identity is a way of life that for centuries has preserved the delicate balance of the Tibetan plateau and what is often known as the “Third Pole.” Glaciers in Tibet act as a water storage tower for

Asia, holding the third-largest store of water ice in the world. This glacial melt then feeds some of south and southeast Asia’s largest rivers, including the Ganges and the Mekong, which around 1.5 billion people rely upon.

Large-scale dams across Tibet, including the potential Kamtok, also drain the Tibetan plateau to generate electricity. But Tibet is a country on the frontlines of climate change, perhaps more so than any other, as temperatures are rising two to four times higher than the global average. Because of that, glaciers are melting rapidly, threatening the future water supply while below-average rainfall has already impacted China’s current hydropower generation despite the constant construction of more dams.

This investment in hydropower, as well as solar and wind, is part of China’s plan to transform itself from the world’s largest emitter of greenhouse gases to a leader in climate change action. By 2030, the Chinese government plans to peak carbon emissions and become carbon neutral by 2060. Alongside clean energy investments, the government has been quietly mining the plateau for minerals such as gold, copper and lithium, which are essential to the green transition. These extractive processes — protected by checkpoints, prohibited for Tibetans and often undertaken at night — can pollute the soil, air and water, said Yangtso from the International Tibet Network.

Given that Tibet largely exists in a media blackout and the consequences of sending even a photo out of the region are dire, it’s difficult to monitor the environmental impacts of these projects. But the plundering of resources — from water to lithium — also raises the question: Is climate change mitigation under occupation simply a greenwashing of human rights abuses?

“There’s no value of the Tibetan people and no respect for traditional knowledge or the ecosystem,” Yangtso said. “The Chinese government just wants to exploit the natural resources as much as possible. They see Tibet as a solution for their global climate goals.”

At an international level, the recent protests and human rights abuses have not gone unnoticed. Tibetans in exile, from northern India to London, protested in solidarity with those arrested. Thousands more across Europe and the U.S. joined for Tibetan Uprising Day, which commemorates the lives lost during the 1959 protests against China’s occupation. Thanks to the efforts of organizers, a new bipartisan House resolution recently recognized the 65th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day and condemned the human rights violations in Derge.

While there is some uncertainty as to whether the Kamtok Hydropower Project will be constructed, organizations have continued their advocacy work

through petition writing and lobbying Western governments to pressure China. Meanwhile, the videos captured in Tibet, which people knowingly risked personal safety to send outside of the country, have circulated on social media and in international news. It is this assertion of autonomy under occupation that has not only revealed the cost of protest under repression but served as a reminder that — despite the consequences — there remains power in dissent.

“This dam may be built, they may get arrested, but one thing within their control is to get this news out into the world,” Tsultrim said. “To show people that this is the reality of what’s going on inside China’s occupied Tibet, this is the reality for Tibetans.”

### Historic Tibetan Buddhist monastery is being moved to make way for dam

12 April 2024, Pelbar, Tenzin Pema and Gai Tho, [RFA](#)



Atsok Monastery in Dragkar county, Tsolho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in western China's Qinghai province, in an undated picture.

Authorities have begun relocating a 19th-century Tibetan Buddhist monastery in China that is expected to be submerged under water after the completion of the world’s tallest 3D-printed hydropower dam, two sources from the region told Radio Free Asia.

The expansion of the Yangqu hydropower station on the Yellow River — known as the Machu River among the Tibetans — in Qinghai province was started in 2022 and will be completed later this year.

For the past two years, monks from Atsok Gon Dechen Choekhorling Monastery in Dragkar county, or Xinghai in Chinese, have petitioned authorities to rescind relocation orders issued by China’s National Development and Reform Commission, or NDRC, a Tibetan source said, insisting on not being identified to protect his safety.

But in April 2023 the government’s Department of National Heritage declared that the artifacts and murals inside the monastery were of “no significant value or importance” and that its relocation would proceed, he said.

Chinese authorities have announced to local residents that they will fund the costs of dismantling and reconstructing the monastery, and performing ceremonies and rituals at the relocated area, the sources said.

However, many of the murals and surrounding stupas cannot be physically moved and so will be destroyed. Tibetans also believe that the place is sacred: That it has been made holier over 135 years of prayers and practice by generations in the same venue.

#### Disregard for cultural heritage

The dam’s construction, Tibetans say, is yet another example of Beijing’s disregard for their culture, religion and environment.

Videos obtained by RFA showed a relocation ceremony being held earlier this month outside Atsok Monastery while authorities addressed local residents from a stage flanked by trucks and cranes on both sides.

“The resettlement work could begin with the government’s approval and the support of the local population,” a local Chinese official can be heard saying in one video.

Other footage obtained by RFA show scores of Tibetan residents praying and prostrating themselves on the road and in the fields before stupas near Atsok Monastery in what sources said was their way of “bidding farewell to this ancient monastery that has been their place of devotion for generations of Tibetans.”

The monastery, founded in 1889 and named after its founder Atsok Choktrul Konchog Choedar, is home to more than 160 monks. In 2021, the government issued an order forbidding monks under the age of 18 from enrolling or studying and living in the monastery.

And while authorities have announced that the monks and residents of nearby villages will be relocated to Khokar Naglo, near Palkha township, no alternative housing has been built for the monks, the sources said. Seizing land

Tibetans often accuse Chinese companies and officials of improperly seizing land and disrupting the lives of local people, sometimes resulting in standoffs that are violently suppressed.

In February, police arrested more than 1,000 Tibetans, including monks, who had been protesting the construction of a dam in Dege county in Sichuan’s Kardze Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture, that would submerge at least six monasteries and force several villages to be moved.

The NDRC said the Yangqu dam will force the relocation of 15,555 people — nearly all ethnic Tibetans — living in 24 towns and villages in three counties — Dragkar, Kawasumdo and Mangra. Dragkar county sits in Tsolho, or Hainan in Chinese, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the historic Amdo region of Tibet.



They warned the head of the monastery and residents that they “will be punished for any disturbance caused,” the sources said.

The Yangqu hydroelectric plant — expected to generate about 5 billion kilowatts of power annually to Henan province — is an expansion of the Yangqu Dam that was first built in 2010 and began operating in 2016 as a 1,200-megawatt hydropower station.

The expanded hydropower dam is expected to be the world’s tallest structure built with 3D printing, as detailed by scientists in the Journal of Tsinghua University.

The first section of the dam, said to be over 150 meters (about 500 feet) tall, is scheduled to become operational this year, and the entire project operational the following year.

**Chinese police mass killing: Over 20 lives lost in peaceful protests in Lhasa, Tibet**

11 April 2024, Tenzin Lhadon, [The Tibet Post](#)



Lhasa Normal Lhasa Normal School (ལྷ་སའི་དགེ་འོས་མཛེ་སློབ་ཆེད་ཚན་སློབ་གྲྭ།), Lhasa, Capital of Tibet. (Photo:file)

Emerging sources say that armed Chinese police in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, have cracked down over 500 Tibetan students who were demonstrating peacefully in the school; over 20 students were beaten to death; of them, two were killed on the spot by police using truncheons; several of them were trampled to death as they tried to escape police pursuit; and four students jumped from a building to protest the closure of the school.

Approximately 500 Tibetan students at Lhasa Normal School (ལྷ་སའི་དགེ་འོས་མཛེ་སློབ་ཆེད་ཚན་སློབ་གྲྭ།), located approximately 7 km from the central city of Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, peacefully staged a sit-in in the school playground on March 16, 2024, to protest the school's closure for four months, the extreme controls imposed on students, and demand to see the principal, but they were met by hundreds of armed Chinese police, emerging sources said. Chinese police, with arms and truncheons, inhumanely tortured the peaceful student demonstrators for staging protests over their school closure for over two months; two students were killed on the spot; four students jumped from the

building; and several other students were trampled as they tried to run among the students when chased by the police brutality of beatings, resulting in the total death of more than 20 students, the sources stressed. This incident came after the closure of Tibetan colleges and universities in Tibet by the government of China, began on March 14, 2008, after thousands of Tibetans from all three traditional Provinces of Tibet staged peaceful protests against the Chinese repressive policies towards Tibetan people in Tibet, which were violently repressed by armed police, causing the killing, injuring, and arrests of several hundred Tibetans, many of whom were facing heavy long-term imprisonments, said a source seeking to remain anonymous for fear of arrest and torture.

The source told TPI that "the closures of Tibetan colleges and universities have become an 'old fashion'" and have been going on for the last 16 years, which usually happen for a month or two months; the college implemented the measure every year, but this year imposed a four-month closure, causing anger among students for missing one semester, resulting in mass student protests."

Before school crackdowns, a group of students approached the school principal with a petition signed by 120 students concerning the closure for four months, which was not only rejected and angrily tore up but also sanctioned severely after school officials, led by the principal, raided from class to class to find all the signatories of the petition, the source continued. The students then appealed to the state-owned Chinese media to raise the issue, which obscured all the students seeking resolution to the problem, which led, with no other options, to turn to overseas media, resulting in immediate alert and wider campus sweeps by Chinese police, putting all colleges and universities in the region under tighter control, the sources stressed.

The sources further added that "students are currently under tightened police control, under constant surveillance, and arbitrarily arrested for having contact with the outside world, as well as forced to swipe their faces and punch their cards to better track their daily movements by schools."

The sources further stated that "the revelation of this year's prolonged closure initially came from a female student at the school, who disclosed the information with "western media," which led to her arrest by the police and her whereabouts remaining unknown, which triggered a large-scale mapping exercise subsequently conducted by both the school and police involving thousands of Tibetan students."

The New Tang Dynasty TV, run by the Falun Gong new religious movement, also reported in detail and stated that "some students tried to request the principal to reduce the closure time, but they were threatened,

with the principal claiming that if they continued to protest, the police would be called in to arrest the students for "Anti-state Crime" or "espionage crime". "Following the events, more than thirty students were detained, allegedly linked to their use of the internet to access Gmail for university applications, escalated by the national mailbox's frequent failure to receive crucial correspondence, and monitored extensively by the school, employing CCTV cameras and forcing an app installation named "Canteen Map Net" on their phones to track activities and movements, the report continued.

"This surveillance and tracking measures extend to daily location tracking through the app, with students obligated to provide detailed whereabouts; failure to comply results in late-night calls from school authorities, often involving police inquiries, and persecution of the students in Lhasa by the CCP, which triggered one brave decision to expose the truth to foreign media, hoping to rally international support for the students' rescue," it concluded.

**China blocks popular Tibetan-language blog**

08 April 2024, [RFA](#)

The Chinese government has shut down a popular Tibetan-language blog, angering residents of Tibet and members of the Tibetan exile community who rely on it for access to Tibetan content.

In a statement issued on April 2, the administrator of Luksang Palyon, or "Tibet Sheep" in English, said the website and its related WeChat blog had been blocked by authorities for alleged copyright infringement and that he has filed a formal appeal for authorities to restore it.

"The government has completely blocked access to Luksang Palyon," said the administrator, who did not want to be named for safety reasons.

Over the past few years, Chinese authorities have ramped up efforts to restrict the use of the Tibetan language, with clampdowns on related blogs, schools, websites, social media platforms, and apps, as Beijing pushes ahead with assimilation policies in Tibet.



Collage of logos of the popular online Tibetan-language blog Luksang Palyon and a screenshot of its April 2, 2024, statement announcing its closure by Chinese authorities and its subsequent appeal for restoration of the blog. (Citizen journalist)

Even though the administrator has formally requested that authorities reverse the order, there's little hope that the situation will change, said a person inside Tibet who is familiar with the matter and who also declined to be named.

If restored, Luksang Palyon will ensure the rights of writers are upheld, but if the request is declined, it will "fully comply with the decision of the government," the administrator said in a statement.

The platform also emphasized the importance of copyright protection and the authenticity of the content published on its blog.

Established in March 2013, Luksang Palyon has focused on topics related to Tibetan language and culture, and has built up a loyal community of readers as a source for writings by Tibetans both inside and outside Tibet.

It has published about 10,000 pieces of educational content, Tibetan articles and stories, music lyrics, Tibetan-Chinese translations and audio content.

"Shutting down this platform is a matter of significant loss and concern for the Tibetan scholarly community as it has been a constant source to access content," said Beri Jigme Wangyal, a literature professor and author at the Central University of Tibetan Studies in Varanasi, India. Authorities have blocked other Tibetan-language online platforms in recent years.

In 2022, the China-based language learning app Talkmate and video-streaming service Bilibili removed the Tibetan and Uyghur languages from their sites following a directive issued by Chinese authorities. Later that same year, the creators of a popular Tibetan-language short video-sharing app called GangYang shut it down, citing financial reasons.

ལུག་ཚང་དབལ་ཡོན་གྱི་ཁྱིམ་གཞིས། 羊儿乐园的家园 བོད་སྐད་ཡིག་ལམ་ནམ་དུ་བོག་འཛོལ་ལུག་མ་ཤིག་གི་བསྐྱེད་ཆེད་དུ་མི་ཕྱི་བར་གསུམ་དུ་འབད་བཞིན་ཡོད། 致力于创建更美好的藏文网络生活



The Tibetan-language platform Luksang Palyon served as a vital hub for content from Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. (Citizen journalist)

Rights groups, however, said the move was likely prompted by a Chinese government order to close the app as authorities ratcheted up efforts to restrict Tibetans from using their own language.

### **Lone Tibetan Protester Calling for Return of Dalai Lama Detained Incommunicado in Ngaba**

08 April 2024, [TCHRD](#)

Chinese authorities have detained incommunicado a Tibetan monk from the local Kirti Monastery for staging a peaceful solo protest against repressive policies in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, in the Tibetan province of Amdo.

On 26 March, a Tibetan monk named Pema was arbitrarily detained and subjected to incommunicado detention by the local Public Security Bureau Officers for staging a peaceful solo protest by holding a portrait of the Dalai Lama on the stretch of a road known to the local Tibetans as 'martyrs road' in Ngaba County. Local witnesses reported hearing Pema shouting slogans calling for the "Return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet" and "Religious Freedom in Tibet," among others.

Pema, who is in his 50s, is a native of Soruma village in Ngaba County. He is the son of Toepa and the cousin of political prisoner Gendun Choephel, who was incarcerated during the 2008 protest. Pema serves as a primary teacher at the Kirti Monastery while pursuing higher Buddhist studies. He is widely known in the monastery as Gen Pema (English: Teacher Pema).

Following Pema's arbitrary arrest, Chinese security forces have intensified their control and restrictions in Ngaba County, especially in Soruma village and Kirti Monastery.

A source informed TCHRD that "prior to deleting his WeChat account, Chinese authorities contacted individuals on his contact list, seeking information about their identities. His personal WeChat is now inaccessible and has been deleted."

On several occasions, Pema has confronted the local police authorities for pressuring young monks to be enrolled in state-run schools and forcing them to stop attending the Kirti monastic school.

March is considered a 'politically sensitive' month by Chinese authorities because of the 10 March anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day that led to the exile of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and thousands of Tibetans since 1959. The annual sessions of the National People's Congress (NPC) and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) are also held the same month, leading to heightened restrictions in all parts of Tibet.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is gravely concerned about Pema's fate and whereabouts. His current location remains a mystery, and we call for his immediate and unconditional release. Chinese authorities must also disclose Pema's whereabouts and condition to his family members without delay and guarantee his physical and mental well-being.

### **CPC launches education campaign on Party discipline**

07 April 2024, [The State Council The People's Republic of China](#)

The General Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee has issued a circular to launch a Party-wide campaign on CPC discipline education.

During the campaign, running from April to July, CPC members will be studying the newly revised Party regulations on disciplinary action, to strengthen their discipline awareness and always remain loyal, clean and responsible, according to the circular.

Stressing that the education should focus on integrating into everyday work and be consistently implemented, the circular urges discussions among Party members on the study, as well as efforts to use typical violation cases as cautionary lessons so that Party members will understand the bottom line and respect the rules.

The circular also calls on Party committees at all levels to meticulously carry out the education, and warns against pointless formalities.

### **China denies knowledge of monk it arrested for protesting with Dalai Lama portrait**

06 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Chinese police have arrested a Tibetan Buddhist monk in Ngaba (or Ngawa, Chinese: Aba) county of Kardze (Ganzi) prefecture in Sichuan province last month when he staged a lone protest against government policies, carrying a portrait of HH the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, reported *rfa.org* Apr 5, citing both local and exile sources. It is not clear what slogans the monk, who has been named simply as Pema, shouted. China calls the Dalai Lama a separatist leader even though he only seeks meaningful autonomy for his homeland and has persecuted people for possessing his photos and other publications. The monk was stated to have staged his protest march along the road the local Tibetans refer to as the Pawo Road (Martyrs' Road), after a number of protest self-immolation took place on it since or after the year 2009. The arrest was stated to have been made almost immediately after Pema started his

protest march. His condition and whereabouts remain unknown, with the authorities refusing to provide any information to his family.

The monk is stated to be a student of Buddhist philosophy, while also teaching students at the preliminary Buddhist study section, at the local Kirti Monastery, with the county's Suruma Village being his birthplace. The county police, when rung up for information, have denied any knowledge about the monk, even though at least two local Tibetans have confirmed his arrest, speaking on condition of anonymity for safety reasons. The report said that earlier, another Buddhist monk, Tenzin Khenrap, 29, was arrested in Jul 2023 in Nyagchu (Yajiang) county in the same prefecture after they found a photo of the Dalai Lama in his mobile phone, besides other books and documents published outside Tibet. His whereabouts have continued to remain unknown.

Before that, in Jun 2023, Lobsang Thabkhey, 54, a librarian in the same monastery, was arrested, accused of republishing books brought out by exile Tibetan establishments, and for maintaining contact with people outside the region.

And well before that, in Feb 2023, Tsultrim, a Tibetan man from Tsaruma township in the prefecture's Ngaba's Kyungchu county, was arrested after Chinese police found pictures of the Dalai Lama on his mobile phone. The local Chinese court later jailed him for two years, the report said.

### **Wang Junzheng instructs central media in Tibet to promote Tibet propaganda**

08 April 2024, [International Campaign For Tibet](#)

On April 8, Wang Junzheng, secretary of the Party Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region, convened a meeting with the heads of Chinese central media operating in Tibet. During the session, Wang emphasized the importance of implementing CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's directives on the promotion of ideological work and cultivation of a favorable public opinion for a "socialist modern New Tibet." Throughout the discussion, representatives from the Chinese central media outlets in Tibet shared insights and exchanged practices regarding propaganda and reporting. Wang Junzheng commended the central media for its correct political direction and conducting extensive, multi-faceted propaganda campaigns. Highlighting the significance of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China and the 65th anniversary of Tibet's democratic reform, Wang stressed the pivotal role of the Chinese state media in shaping public perceptions and narratives.

While the party secretary gave his political instructions to the Chinese media operating in Tibet, the Foreign Correspondent's Club of China coincidentally issued a damning report of media freedom in China on April 8. The FCCC's report "Masks Off, Barriers Remain" states in its findings that:

-Almost all respondents (99%) said reporting conditions in China rarely or never met international reporting standards.

-Four out of five (81%) respondents said they had experienced interference, harassment or violence.

-54% of respondents were obstructed at least once by police or other officials (2022: 56%), and 45% encountered obstruction at least once by persons unknown (2022: 36%).

-A majority of respondents had reason to believe the authorities had possibly or definitely compromised their WeChat (81%), their phone (72%) or placed audio recording bugs in their office or home (55%).

-Almost a third (32%) of respondents said their bureau was understaffed because they have been unable to bring in the required number of new reporters.

-82% of respondents reported they had interviews declined by sources who stated they were not permitted to speak to foreign media or required prior permission.

-More than a third (37%) of respondents said reporting trips or interviews already confirmed were canceled last minute because of official pressure (2022: 31%).

-49% of respondents indicated their Chinese colleague(s) had been pressured, harassed or intimidated at least once (2022: 45%; 2021: 40%).

## Controversy Erupts as China Restricts Tibetan Buddhist Practices in Dalai Lama's Name

12 April 2024, Yuvraj Tyagi, [Republic World](#)

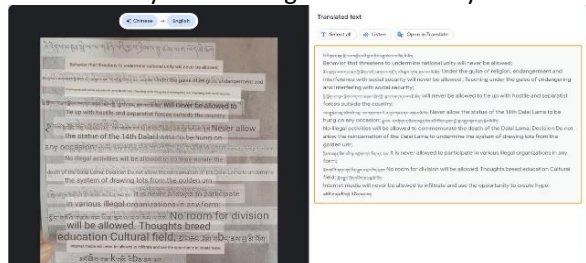
*China has distributed a training booklet with directives curbing Tibetan Buddhist rituals, particularly those associated with the Dalai Lama's passing. China has distributed a training booklet with directives curbing Tibetan Buddhist rituals, particularly those associated with the Dalai Lama's passing.*



Chinese PLA in Tibet region | Image:Chinamil

# BUDDHISM

The Chinese government's recent actions in eastern Tibet have raised alarms internationally, with critics decrying what they see as a blatant violation of religious freedoms. A training booklet distributed to Tibetan monasteries has ignited controversy, particularly its directives aimed at curbing religious rites and rituals associated with the Dalai Lama's passing. The booklet, intercepted by reliable sources, outlines stringent prohibitions against Tibetan Buddhist monks engaging in what the Chinese government deems as "illegal" religious activities. These directives include restrictions on commemorating the death of the Dalai Lama, and prohibiting any activities that may "undermine national unity" or "endanger social security."



The document was translated by Google Lens. Critics argue that such measures represent a clear infringement on the religious rights of Tibetans, particularly given the Dalai Lama's status as the exiled spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. Furthermore, the directives aim to suppress expressions of Tibetan identity and cultural heritage, posing a threat to the unique religious practices and traditions of Tibetan

Buddhism. Historical context and Tibetan struggle for autonomy The Chinese government's actions in Tibet must be understood within the broader historical context of Tibet's relationship with China and the Tibetan people's struggle for autonomy. Following the proclamation of the People's Republic of China, Tibet was formally reincorporated into the country in 1951, under what the Chinese government termed the "Seventeen Point Agreement."

However, tensions between the Tibetan government and the People's Republic of China escalated, culminating in the 1959 Tibetan uprising and the subsequent exile of the Dalai Lama. Since then, Tibetans have faced ongoing repression and cultural assimilation policies imposed by the Chinese government, leading to widespread international condemnation. The Tibetan diaspora and human rights organizations have long criticized China's policies in Tibet, referring to the events of 1950 as a "Chinese invasion" rather than a "peaceful liberation," as claimed by the Chinese government. The dissolution of the Tibetan government and social structures following the 1959 uprising marked a turning point in Tibetan history, with Tibetans continuing to advocate for autonomy and religious freedom. Tibet's contribution to the Indian Army Tibetans have a long history of resistance against Chinese rule, and this history intersects with their contributions to the Indian Army. During the time of the Great Game, the British Indian Army began employing Tibetans as spies, intelligence agents, and even covert militia in northern India and Tibet proper. This strategic partnership continued into the modern era, with Tibetans playing significant roles in the Indian Army. At the time of Indian independence, the northern mountain-covered region of India remained the most isolated and strategically overlooked territory of the subcontinent. As tensions between India and China rose, particularly during the Cold War era, Tibetans became instrumental in intelligence gathering and military operations along the Indo-Tibetan border. The American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB) established Mustang Base in Mustang, Nepal, which trained Tibetans in guerrilla warfare. These efforts culminated in the formation of the Special Frontier Force (SFF), a covert paramilitary unit composed primarily of Tibetan refugees. The SFF played a crucial role in various military operations, including the 1971 Indo-Pak war and the Kargil conflict of 1999.

Former CIA officer John Kennet Knaus credited IB Chief Bhola Nath Mullik for the formation of the SFF, highlighting the close collaboration between Indian and Tibetan forces. Additionally, thousands of Tibetans received training from the United States Army Special Forces, partly funded by the federal

government of the United States, further emphasizing the strategic importance of Tibetan contributions to Indian military efforts. Despite the geopolitical complexities surrounding Tibet's status and its historical ties with India, Tibetans continue to serve with distinction in the Indian Army, embodying the spirit of resilience and sacrifice in defence of their adopted homeland. As tensions between India and China persist, the contributions of Tibetans to the Indian military remain a testament to their unwavering commitment to freedom and democracy.

## China Gives Monks a List of Things They Can't Do After The Dalai Lama's Death

10 April 2024, [CTA](#)

### Authorities lay out instructions in a training manual for Tibetan Buddhist monks.

*-by Radio Free Asia*

In the event of the Dalai Lama's death, Buddhist monks are banned from displaying photos of the Tibetan spiritual leader and other "illegal religious activities and rituals," according to a training manual Chinese authorities have distributed to monasteries in Gansu province in China's northwest, a source inside Tibet and exiled former political prisoner Golok Jigme said. The manual, which lists 10 rules that Buddhist clergy should follow, also forbids disrupting the process of recognizing the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, said the source from inside Tibet who requested anonymity for safety reasons. Tibetans believe they should determine his successor in accordance with their Buddhist belief in reincarnation, while the Chinese government seeks to control the centuries-old selection method. The 14th Dalai Lama, 88, fled Tibet amid a failed 1959 national uprising against China's rule and has lived in exile in Dharamsala, India, ever since. He is the longest-serving Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader in Tibet's history. The manual, which was seen by Radio Free Asia and was issued to monks in Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in the historical Amdo region of Tibet, is the latest effort by Beijing to crack down on the religious freedom of the Tibetan people, experts and rights groups say. [Click here](#) to read.

# STATE OF ECOLOGY OF THE TIBETAN PLATEAU

## Wildfire destroys prized mushrooms, income source for Tibetans

13 April 2024, Tenzin Pema, Dorjee Damdul and Sonam Lhamo, [RFA](#)



*A Tibetan forages for matsutake mushrooms in an undated photo.*

A recent wildfire in a Tibetan-populated area of China's Sichuan province ravaged vast swathes of forests covered with pine and oak trees that nurtured a hidden treasure and an economic lifeline for residents — matsutake mushrooms.

The wildfire that broke out in March in Nyagchu county, or Yajiang in Chinese, in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, forced 3,000 people from the traditional Kham region of Tibet to evacuate the area and burned down several houses. No human casualties have been reported.

But the fire destroyed about one-sixth of the county's matsutake output, Chen Wen, director of the Yajiang Matsutake Industrial Park, told Chinese media.

The mushrooms, which Tibetans gather to supplement their income and others use in dishes in Japan, South Korea and China, may not grow again in the burned area for at least 20 years, he said.

China is the world's largest producer and exporter of matsutake mushrooms, exporting US\$30.3 million in 2022, while Japan is the top importer, bringing in US\$24.7 million that year.

The primary places where the mushrooms grow in China are within the Tibetan plateau, including in Nyagchu county, which accounted for more than 12% of China's annual output, according to the Yajiang County Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Science and Technology Bureau.

Demanding and lucrative

Many families in Nyagchu — where Tibetans make up the majority of the county's population of over 51,000 — have for years braved the frigid mountain air to forage for the elusive mushrooms during the

traditional harvest season between July and September.

Foraging matsutake is a demanding if lucrative job with harvesters often spending weeks at high altitudes in harsh weather conditions to search for the mushrooms, said an area resident. Some varieties are rare and require meticulous searching, while others grow underground and require careful removal, he said.

“In one day, you can make more than 2,000 yuan (US\$300) during the harvesting season,” said a source inside Tibet who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Residents believe that the impact of the fire may force some Tibetans to abandon matsutake harvesting and seek alternative sources of income in other areas.

But at a recent press conference on the impact of the wildfire, Sichuan provincial representatives did not mention the disaster’s potential effects on the livelihoods of Tibetans who rely on matsutake harvesting.

The fire also damaged the local ecosystem, killing birds and insects that play a role in the growth of the mushrooms, said an area resident, adding that the long-term ecological consequences of the blaze remain unclear.

“Nyagchu is renowned for its abundance of naturally grown matsutake, and the harvest is a crucial source of income for many Tibetan families in the county,” said Washington-based Tsering Palden, a native of Nyagchu, who has sold the mushrooms in the past.

Palden estimates that area households earn about 200,000 yuan (US\$28,000) annually from selling the mushrooms.

‘Oak mushrooms’

In Tibet, matsutake mushrooms are most commonly referred to as “oak mushrooms,” or *beshing shamo* and *besha* for short in Tibetan, in a nod to their symbiotic relationship with evergreen oak trees in Tibet.

In his 2022 book “What a Mushroom Lives for: Matsutake and the Worlds They Make,” Michael Hathaway, professor of anthropology at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, describes how Tibetan villagers in Yunan province hunt for them.

The villagers gather the mushrooms in the morning and return home when dealers arrive at a market or drive along the roads, buying them as they go, he writes. The dealers then sell their matsutake to other dealers, who arrange for them to be shipped across China and to Japan and South Korea.

The price of matsutake mushrooms had jumped over the past 40 years from the equivalent of about US\$1 per pound (2.2 kg) in 1985 to US\$70 per pound, according to Beijing-based Tibetan writer and poet Tsering Woenser.

The mushrooms have specific environmental requirements for growth and thrive in undisturbed, high-altitude forests with the right balance of sunlight and moisture, said the source inside Tibet.

“The fire has disrupted these conditions and may take years for the ecosystem to recover sufficiently to support matsutake growth,” he added.

### Earthquake of magnitude 5.5 strikes Tibet, says GFZ

13 April 2024, [Reuters](#)

An earthquake of magnitude 5.5 struck Tibet in western China on Saturday, the German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ) said.

The quake was at a depth of 10 km (6.2 miles), said GFZ, which initially recorded the magnitude at 5.7.

China, which seized control of Tibet in 1950, calls the region Xizang.

### China’s new gold deposit discovery in Qinghai, with 346 mining sites, is worth over \$20 billion

09 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The occupied territories of East Turkestan (Xinjiang) and Tibet have yielded for the Communist Party of China state enormous, world-class deposits of oil, gas, and all sorts of minerals, including gold, lithium, copper, iron, and rare earth minerals. Most recently, Chinese researchers have announced a new gold discovery on the north and south edges of the Qaidam Basin in Qinghai Province, which constitutes the bulk of Tibet’s historical northeastern province of Amdo (or Domey), with an additional 43.2 tons of gold resources.

The discovery marks a significant breakthrough in the area’s gold exploration and its potential for forming a world-class gold deposit, reported China’s official [globaltimes.cn](#) Apr 8.

The new gold discovery has an estimated value of more than 20 billion yuan (\$2.77 billion), the report said citing the Science of Technology Department of Qinghai Province.

Exploitation will begin at once as China expects more deposit discoveries. As the latest achievement in the province’s large-scale resource exploration project, the discovery reveals for the first time the deep-seated gold enrichment zone in the area, which is poised for immediate exploitation and boost local employment, the report said.

The discovery is part of the Tanjianshan Gold Mine and the Wulonggou Gold Mine, which are notable large-scale gold deposits in Qinghai Province, serving as sites that integrate research, exploration, and development, the report said.



Highlighting the Qaidam Basin's reputation as China's "Treasure Bowl", the report said the Qaidam Basin stands as one of China's significant hubs for energy and mineral resources.

The new finding revealed Qinghai Province's first discovery of a secondary ore enrichment zone in large gold mines, indicating the area's potential for forming a world-class gold deposit, set to benefit mining businesses, boosting their production capacities and local employment, the report said, citing [Chinanews.com.cn](http://chinanews.com.cn).

As a prominent province boasting a concentration of vital mineral resources, Qinghai has established 346 gold mining sites, with the largest Dachang Gold Mine located in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, holding reserves equal to 108.63 tons, the report added.

### **This fungus that turns caterpillars into zombies is more expensive than gold. And it might go extinct because of it**

09 April 2024, [ZME Science](https://www.zmescience.com)

The Tibetan Plateau in the Himalayas is home to a fungus (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) that turns caterpillars into zombies. It's part of the same Cordyceps fungal group that inspired the video game and later the HBO series *The Last of Us*. The caterpillar fungus is believed to be an aphrodisiac and is known as yartsa gunbu by locals.

Describing its aphrodisiacal properties, ancient Tibetan texts mention that men who consume yartsa are promised "the delights of thousands of beautiful women." Others boast about the caterpillar fungus' benefits to the immune system, using it to treat coughs and "strengthening the lungs".



A dried sample of the *ophiocordyceps sinensis*, more commonly called the caterpillar fungus. Credit: David Wong

No scientific evidence has validated these claims thus far. Still, yartsa is in such high demand in some parts of the world that it is sold at a higher price than gold. For instance, a report from *NPR* reveals that people buy yartsa for as high as \$2,000 per ounce in China where the fungus is also considered a status symbol.

"[Caterpillar fungus is] more likely to be found in a luxury shopping mall than a pharmacy. The perceived value of the resource is now so high that it's a fashionable gift or party favor among China's elite," according to a report from *National Geographic*.

The growth and harvesting of yartsa gunbu

The English translation of yartsa gunbu is "winter worm summer grass," to describe how the winter caterpillar becomes grass in summer.

During the summer season, the ghost moth caterpillars hibernate underground. This is when the airborne spores of *O. sinensis* invade their bodies, compelling them to climb upwards towards the soil's surface, where the fungus then kills and consumes them.

The fungus manipulates the insect's brain chemistry, forcing it to ascend to a height that optimizes the fungus's growth conditions and spore distribution. Once above ground, the caterpillar dies and appears mummified because its exoskeleton turns pale. With the arrival of the spring season, the fungus begins to come out of the heads of the dead caterpillars in the form of a long stalk.

This mind control ensures the fungus's life cycle continues. But for the locals of the Tibetan Plateau, this is just another harvesting season.

Once its stalk is visible on the ground, the world's most expensive fungus is ready for harvesting. Many households in the Tibetan Plateau depend on earnings from harvesting this fungus, sometimes known as the 'Viagra of the Himalayas'.

Geoff Childs and Namgyal Choedup, two researchers from Washington University in St. Louis (WUSTL) published a study in 2014 highlighting the sizable role yartsa plays in the Tibetan economy. Their research showed the good, bad, and ugly side of yartsa gunbu harvesting.

"With an eight-fold increase in value from ¥4,800 (~\$32) to ¥40,000 (~\$260) per pound yartsa gunbu has become the mainstay of household economies across the Tibetan Plateau. It fills an economic void in Tibetan areas of China that state-sponsored development projects, which tend to focus on infrastructure, do not always satisfy," the study authors note.

"Tibetans are using the cash to improve their standard of living, and in some cases are reducing dependency on agro-pastoral activities by becoming entrepreneurs. Profits pay for everything from school supplies and DVDs to solar panels and gold jewelry," they added.

However, it's not just Tibetans. Yartsa gunbu has also brought prosperity to people living in the Himalayan villages of Nepal, India, and Bhutan.

The dark side of caterpillar fungi

Unfortunately, the high economic value of yartsa has also led to violent conflicts in the Tibetan Plateau. For

instance, in 2014, a clash between two groups in Tibet over access to yartsa gunbu harvesting resulted in two deaths. And this was just one of the many disputes in the region that revolve around the caterpillar fungus.



Harvester cleaning the caterpillar fungus. Image credits: Geoff Childs, 2012

“Earlier, we only had village meetings once or twice a year. Nowadays there are frequent meetings with more arguments between people, and more squabbles. People are becoming selfish,” a local man told Childs and Choedup.

Moreover, people are overexploiting the Himalayan grasslands for yartsa, which is accelerating the loss of the only habitat where the fungus grows.

*Ophiocordyceps sinensis* is already an endangered species. If the situation continues like this, it may soon go extinct. A study published in 2018 warned that overharvesting and climate change are causing the demise of the fungus.

“A collapse of the caterpillar fungus system under ongoing warming and high collection pressure would have serious implications throughout the Himalayan region,” the authors noted.

However, despite all these negative developments, there is still some hope. In their study, Child and Choedup also reveal the story of two Himalayan villages where people have devised strategies to achieve peaceful and sustainable harvesting of the caterpillar fungus.

Sustainable ways to harvest yartsa

The senior leaders in Nubri (a village in the highlands of Nepal) have developed a system that protects their yartsa. This system is based on religious and local beliefs that ensure stable income for all families in the village. By extension, it also prevents overexploitation of the caterpillar fungus.

Village leaders are central to the process. Each year, they decide on a date on which people are allowed to begin harvesting yartsa. From that date to the end of the harvesting season, each harvester must meet the leaders in person every week.

No villager is allowed to harvest before or after the scheduled harvesting season. If an individual violates this rule, they’re heavily fined. Since the harvesting area is far from the village, a person can’t harvest more

than their quota and meet the leaders on the same day.

This system provides everyone an equal opportunity to collect the caterpillar fungus. The harvesters are also liable to pay taxes, and the funds are spent on development activities in the village.

Plus, the fungus is only harvested for a brief period. So yartsa and its natural environment have a whole year to recover from any loss incurred due to harvesting. Moreover, Nubri people are prohibited from harvesting in certain sacred regions because of their religious beliefs. Such undisturbed areas become natural havens for *O. sinensis* spores.

However, Nubri isn’t the only village that has a sustainable yartsa harvesting system. People in the Tsum Valley of Nepal also follow a similar strategy with some changes. For instance, every individual born in the valley has an equal right to collect yartsa. However, any outsiders, including tourists and men who were not born in Tsum but settled here after marriage are prohibited from harvesting.

This prevents conflicts and overexploitation of yartsa, enabling the locals to keep their sacred natural resources protected and under their control.

The harvesters in Tsum also have to pay taxes. However, this money is used not only for building basic infrastructure in the village. It also goes towards constructing lodges that cater to foreign tourists, creating an additional income stream for the locals.

“In the case of Nubri and Tsum, management practices that were devised independent of state interference may prove to be sustainable over the long run,” Child and Choedup said.

The study has been published in *The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*.

## The disappearing glaciers of the Himalayas

03 April 2024, Omair Ahmad, [Kashmir Convener](#)

As the Earth warms, frozen water in its many forms is affected. In mountainous regions like the Hindu Kush Himalayas, one of the most visible signs of climate change is the impact on glaciers.

In the Hindu Kush Himalayan region – which includes the mountain ranges of the Pamirs, the Tien Shan and the Tibetan Plateau – the cryosphere is a vital source of freshwater. Approximately 2 billion people rely on the rivers that flow from these mountain ranges, with more than 240 million people living in the mountain areas. As well as providing a water supply for humans, livestock and wildlife in the region, freshwater originating in the cryosphere is essential for agriculture, hydropower, inland navigation, and spiritual and cultural uses.

While water flow is determined by a host of factors – including rainfall, groundwater and springs – the

presence of the cryosphere has led to stable water flows across the Hindu Kush Himalayan region. But as the frozen water in glaciers, snow and permafrost is now melting at unprecedented rates, these flows are changing.

The Himalayan glaciers are receding

Glacier loss is difficult to project over the whole of the Hindu Kush Himalayas. Rates of glacial melt depend on a number of variables, including elevation and elevation-dependent temperature, precipitation and debris cover, among others.

On the whole, glaciers across the Hindu Kush Himalayas have lost mass since the 1970s. Unfortunately, given political sensitivities in the region, much satellite photography from before 2000 remains classified, and high-altitude field-based surveys are difficult. Nevertheless, the data that has emerged in recent years allows scientists to make general predictions for the region.

In the near term, by 2030, glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region are expected to lose between 10-30% of their mass. By 2050, this figure is expected to increase to 25-35%. In the long term, by 2080-2100, glacial mass loss is predicted to reach 35% in the Karakoram, 45% in the Pamir mountains, and as high as 60-95% in the eastern Himalayas if world governments fail to implement aggressive emissions-reduction policies. All of these figures are based on a moderate emissions scenario (RCP 4.5). Given different emissions scenarios and modelling methods, there is significant variation between longer-term projections.

There are thousands of glaciers in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, and there will be anomalies in terms of glacial melt. The glaciers in the eastern part of the region are at a lower elevation on the whole than those in the western part, leaving them relatively more vulnerable to melting. In the Karakoram region, which hosts a number of high-altitude glaciers, there have even been some glacial surges, leading to discussion of a “Karakoram Anomaly”.

The Himalayan region is warming faster than the global average

The Hindu Kush Himalayan region has the largest concentration of frozen water on Earth after the North Pole and South Pole, hence it is referred to as “the third pole”. Like the Arctic and part of Antarctica, the Hindu Kush Himalayan region is warming faster than the global average, and for similar reasons.

As ice cover melts, it exposes larger areas to solar radiation, thus allowing greater absorption of heat. Since ice reflects light, as the ground is increasingly exposed this leads to greater heating. The fact that many glaciers in the HKH region are covered with debris means this effect is less pronounced than in areas like the Arctic. Greater detail on exactly how and

why this is happening can be found in the third chapter of the HKH Assessment conducted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

Unfortunately, the glaciers of the Hindu Kush Himalayas are facing another problem: black carbon. This is essentially soot from fires in the surrounding lowlands which rises in the air and settles on glaciers. Because of its dark colour, black carbon absorbs solar radiation faster. Black carbon and other short-lived climate pollutants – such as dust and aerosols – are produced by a range of human activities, including biomass burning, brick factories, and coal-based electricity plants. Not only do they darken the glaciers, these pollutants can also lead to warming of the air mass, leading to higher temperatures around the cryosphere and melting of its ice.

What happens when glaciers melt rapidly?

It is difficult to speculate how exactly the melting of the third pole’s glaciers will impact water flow and availability across the regions that depend on Himalayan rivers. This is because multiple factors influence water flow, including the stability of monsoons that are responsible for precipitation – both rain and snow – in the region.

One effect that can be predicted is an increase in glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs).

While it is very difficult to predict individual GLOFs, it is clear that their frequency will go up as the climate warms. Since the 1990s, glacial lakes across the Hindu Kush Himalayan region have increased in both number and size. Given the regional disparity in elevation, the greatest increase has been in the eastern and central sections of the Hindu Kush Himalayas.

GLOFs can be devastating, as the resulting flash floods can devastate downstream habitations with little warning. Given the number of hydropower projects in the region, GLOFs can also pose a risk to long-term infrastructure such as dams.

The permafrost is melting

Not all frozen water in the Hindu Kush Himalayas is in the form of glaciers. Glaciers are often referred to as rivers of ice, as they are large frozen volumes of water that slowly flow. Where there is less flow, but the temperature remains below freezing, ice accumulates in the ground as permafrost. As a general rule of thumb, humid areas have more glaciers while arid areas have more permafrost. In the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, permafrost is found across around 1,000,000 square kilometres, whereas glaciers occur across around 90,000 square kilometres.

Within the Hindu Kush Himalayan region, study of the permafrost has been largely restricted to the Tibetan Plateau, beginning in the 1990s. Little research has been carried out in the rest of the region. The research on the Tibetan Plateau shows that the active layer of

permafrost is thickening as the permafrost melts. This makes the ground less stable, leading to higher risk of landslides.

#### Policy recommendations

Three main policy recommendations emerge out of the latest, most detailed survey of the cryosphere in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region (the HKH Assessment) as part of the Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme conducted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). First and foremost, the world must focus on lowering carbon emissions. The challenges of managing the cryosphere will only increase if the world warms at a faster rate. Second, the HKH Assessment recommends the expansion of observation networks and data-sharing agreements across the extended HKH region. Third, improvements in research and observation should be used to anticipate disasters such as GLOFs and avalanches, and put processes in place to minimise their impacts.

*The data in this explainer is based on the HKH Assessment report. Any errors of interpretation are the author's. Omair Ahmad is managing editor for South Asia at The Third Pole. He has worked as a political analyst and journalist, with a particular focus on the Himalayan region. He is the author of a political history of Bhutan, and a few novels. This article was originally published on The Third Pole under the Creative Commons BY NC ND licence.*

### Half-Stopped Factories Become Norm in Chinese Lithium Battery Industry

01 April 2024, [East Money](#)

Shanghai-based Chinese financial news site East Money recently reported that, “as the period of frenzied investment has passed, the Chinese lithium battery industry has been shrouded in the shadow of overcapacity and price wars. .. After the Chinese New Year, which is often the peak period for job hunting and employment, many battery companies reported suspensions of production, layoffs, and salary cuts.” Below are some translated excerpts from the article.

The oversupply situation in the lithium battery industry has been reflected in all aspects of the entire supply chain. Some sources told the reporters that, in the new energy industry chain from top to bottom, no orders and half-stopped factories have become the norm. “The bosses themselves are looking to find a more stable job.” Starting this year, even large companies are in danger. Other than the two “super players,” CATL and BYD, the question is: how many battery companies can survive past spring?

The turning point for the lithium battery industry's sharp decline occurred in the fourth quarter of 2022. The trigger was that the sales growth rate of new energy vehicles began to slow down significantly, which was not expected by the industry. Because of this, since 2023, the battery industry has fought a fierce price war, and capacity utilization has further declined as well. Even for CATL, its 2021 manufacturing capacity utilization rate was as high as 95 percent, dropped to 83.4 percent in 2022, and further dropped to 70.47 percent in 2023, which is still much higher than the industry average capacity utilization rate – around 41.8 percent.

Right now, the lithium battery industry is still facing the challenge brought by the worsen high EV inventories as the result of the rapid expansion of new energy vehicles. In the meantime, the battery inventory of the energy storage industry is piling up too. No one knows when the lithium battery industry will emerge from the bottom. A new round of elimination in the market seems to be just starting.

## Sikyong Penpa Tsering Discusses Bringing Positive Change in China with Swiss Parliamentarians

30 April 2024, [CTA](#)



*Sikyong Penpa Tsering and Representative Thinlay Chukki with Speaker of the Swiss National Council, Eric Nussbaumer.*

## TIBET IN EXILE

Sikyong Penpa Tsering interacted with members of the Swiss Parliament and participated in closed meetings with prominent leaders and senior officials of the Swiss administration on 29 April 2024 in Bern.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering was graciously hosted at the Swiss Parliament by the Parliamentary Group for Tibet, led by MP Maya Graf-Vice President of the PGT, MP Barbara Gysi-PGT member, MP Fabian Molina, Co-President of the PGT, and MP Nik Gugger, Co-President of the PGT.

Throughout the extended meeting with the Parliamentarians, Sikyong Penpa Tsering underscored the pivotal role of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, and Taiwanese as intrinsic agents of change within China, “If you want to bring positive change in China, you need both internal and external forces, and we are the internal forces.”

Further, Sikyong Penpa Tsering appealed to the Parliamentarians on the significance of the historical status of Tibet in adding value to the Middle Way Policy. Sikyong also advocated for parliamentary initiatives aimed at addressing the prevailing situation inside Tibet.

In the growing climate of interest across Europe and globally in reevaluating their China policies, spurred by recent experiences, Sikyong Penpa Tsering implored Switzerland to adopt a more pragmatic approach in its bilateral relations with China.

In response, MP Maya Graf echoed the call for a paradigm shift, underscoring the imperative of historical context, and revisiting past stances.

The meeting culminated in a luncheon held within the parliament halls in honour of the Sikyong’s visit, attended by MP Fabian Molina, Co-president of PGT, MP Nik Gugger, Co-president PGT, along with MP Maya Graf and MP Barbara Gysi.

Rene Longet, Co-founder of the Parliamentary Group for Tibet, also joined the meeting. Sikyong Penpa Tsering expressed gratitude to Longet for his unwavering support for Tibet and his instrumental role in the establishment of the Swiss parliamentary group for Tibet 35 years ago.

Accompanying Sikyong Tsering were Representative Thinlay Chukki and Phuntsok Topgyal from the Tibet Bureau Geneva, Chisur Jampa Samdho, Co-president of Gesellschaft Schweizerisch-Tibetische Freundschaft (GSTF), Thomas Buchli, Secretary of the Tibet Parliamentary Group, President of Tibet Community Switzerland and Liechtenstein Ngedun Gyatso Drongpatsang, Vice President Kalsang Kangrang, Namgyal Gangshontsang, Mayor of Oetwil a.S, GSTF Board members Lhawang Ngorkhangsar and Michaela Litzenburger, Bettina Eckert GSTF, VTJE Co-president Arya Amipa, and Selina Morell from STP.

On the evening of 29 April, Sikyong had a dinner engagement with the Speaker of the Swiss National Council, Eric Nussbaumer. Sikyong was accompanied by Representative Thinlay Chukki, Tibet Bureau Geneva and Phuntsok Topgyal, Tibet Bureau Geneva. On the sidelines of the visit, Sikyong also gave media interviews with prominent Swiss local press.

### **Sikyong Addresses Tibetan Community in Zurich, Debunks Recent Comment by Spokesperson of Chinese Foreign Ministry**

29 April 2024, [CTA](#)



*Sikyong Penpa Tsering addressing the Tibetan community of Zurich. Photo / Tenzin Nyishon*

Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the democratically elected leader of the exile Tibetan people, embarked on his five-nation tour starting with Zurich on 28 April 2024. Led by Representative Thinlay Chukki, Tibet Bureau Geneva and its staff, and Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Tibetan communities in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, the community extended a warm welcome to Sikyong as he arrived on his second round of official visits there.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering's first engagement was at the Tibet Institute Rekon, where he held a meeting with

Dr. Karma Dolma Lobsang, President of Rikon, Managing Director Peter Oberholzer, Ven. Lama Tenzin Jottotshang, Representative of the Monastic Community and Ven. Abbot Geshe Tenzin Jangchup along with Representative of Tibet Bureau Geneva and President of Tibetan Community of Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

Later, Sikyong engaged with the Tibetan community at Dietikon, including a brief interaction with the teachers and heads of the Weekend Tibetan language school.

In his address to the Tibetan community, Sikyong emphasised everyone to remember and appreciate the dedicated contributions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and elder Tibetans for setting up this unparalleled exile community with well established democratic system to maintain Tibetan freedom struggle while imploring the newer generations to uphold their legacies.

Highlighting the importance of the continued existence and relevance of the Central Tibetan Administration in Tibetans' pursuit of freedom, the Tibetan political leader said, "Since we are unsure if someone with His Holiness' level of influence and impact will take the helm, it is crucial that this institution must endure in order to safeguard the Tibetan freedom movement going forward."

Sikyong further apprised the gathering of 16th Kashag's official undertakings to capacitate and strengthen the operations of the Central Tibetan Administration. And, with regard to the recent comment made by Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson on back-channel communication between the Central Tibetan Administration and the People's Republic of China, the Tibetan political leader stressed, "Negotiation is the only way forward for resolving the Tibet-China conflict and the Central Tibetan Administration would continue making appeals to the government and international community to urge the Chinese government to resume the dialogue."

In this connection, Sikyong urged the Chinese government to start enacting constructive reforms within Tibet instead of giving His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Tibetan leaders instructions on what to do or not.

On 29 April, Sikyong is set to meet with Swiss parliamentarians in the capital city of Bern.

### **Resolution of Sino-Tibet conflict to be mutually beneficial: Tibetan leadership**

29 April 2024, [Hindustan Times](#)

Penpa Tsering said last week his interlocutor was dealing with "people in Beijing", and "other elements" on the Chinese side have also reached out. The Tibetan

government-in-exile has reiterated that resolving the “Sino-Tibet conflict” through a process that leads to genuine autonomy for Tibet will be mutually beneficial, days after Beijing ruled out talks with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong or political leader of the CTA, told a small group of reporters in Dharamshala last week that the Tibetan government-in-exile has opened back channel communications with China to explore ways to find a resolution to the issue of Tibet though there is no expectation of an immediate breakthrough. Responding to Tsering’s remarks, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Friday that Beijing will only have talks with the personal representative of the Dalai Lama and not the Tibetan government-in-exile.

“The Middle Way Policy (MWP) of [the] Central Tibetan Administration is to seek genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the framework of Chinese constitution & Regional National Autonomy Law of China,” CTA spokesperson Tenzin Lekshay said in a post on X in response to the Chinese foreign ministry’s stance.

“Resolving Sino-Tibet conflict through MWP is mutually beneficial,” Lekshay said, referring to the Tibetan government-in-exile’s official position of seeking autonomy, and not independence, for Tibet. The Indian side has not made any official comments on this issue so far. The Tibetan government-in-exile is based in Dharamshala town in Himachal Pradesh and Tsering said the CTA works closely with the external affairs ministry and Indian security agencies on the issue of Tibet.

Tsering also said his interlocutor has been dealing with “people in Beijing”, and “other elements” on the Chinese side have sought to reach out to the Tibetan leadership.

“We keep the communications going, it has been almost more than a year since we started the back channels,” Tsering said. “They [the Chinese] are reaching out to us, it’s not us reaching out to them. But to hope for something at this juncture? It is not realistic.” Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang, however, described the Tibetan government-in-exile as an “organised separatist political group” with an agenda for “Tibetan independence”. The Chinese government will only have contacts and talks with the personal representative of the Dalai Lama, and such talks will “only be about the personal future” of the Dalai Lama and “not the so-called ‘high degree of autonomy for Tibet’”, he said.

Wang added that “future contact and talks” can be considered when the Dalai Lama gives up “any activity aimed at disrupting the social order” in Tibet.

## China pushed back on rights, Tibet in meetings with top US diplomat

28 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Back from meetings with top Chinese leaders in Beijing and Shanghai over Apr 24-26, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said that apart from discussing the numerous weighty matters that continue to bedevil good relations between the two sides, issues relating to human rights and Tibet as well as Xinjiang and other serious concerns such, especially, as Taiwan were also raised. But China has made it clear that it pushed back against the US advocacy on those issues.

At a press availability on Apr 26, Blinken has said: “I raised the cases of American citizens who are wrongfully detained and those who are subject to exit bans. President Biden and I will not rest until they’re back with their families where they belong. I also raised concerns about the erosion of Hong Kong’s autonomy and democratic institutions as well as transnational repression, ongoing human rights abuses in Xinjiang and Tibet, and a number of individual human rights cases.”

Blinken has not said what China’s reaction was to his raising of those concerns. However, China’s official Xinhua news agency Apr 27 cited Yang Tao, Director General of the Department of North American and Oceanian Affairs of the Foreign Ministry, as saying at a media briefing on the just-concluded visit: “On issues related to Hong Kong, Xinjiang, Xizang, and human rights, Yang noted that Hong Kong belongs to China, and the United States should respect China’s sovereignty and the rule of law in Hong Kong. Any smearing campaign must be stopped. Issues related to Xinjiang and Xizang are China’s internal affairs. The United States should not make unwarranted remarks, still less interfere in them under the pretext of human rights.”

In fact, referring to Blinken’s plans made clear earlier to raise those issues during his upcoming meetings, China made it clear Apr 23 that it will not welcome any raising of human rights, Tibet, and Taiwan issues.

China’s official globaltimes.cn Apr 23 cited a senior official from the country’s Foreign Ministry as saying that it will be made clear that “issues related to Xinjiang, Xizang [Tibet], and Hong Kong are matters of China’s internal affairs and have nothing to do with so-called human rights.”

The report cited the unnamed senior official as saying the US must not use human rights as an excuse to interfere in China’s internal affairs, that how human rights are in a country is best judged by its own people, the official was stated to have maintained.

Xinhua cited Yang as saying Blinken’s visit took place at the invitation of Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist

Party of China Central Committee. The visit was stated to be part of the efforts by China and the US to follow through on the common understandings reached by the two presidents at their meeting in San Francisco, maintain dialogue, manage differences, advance cooperation and strengthen coordination on international affairs.

Apart from President Xi Jinping and Wang Yi, Blinken was stated to have met with Wang Xiaohong, State Councilor and Minister of Public Security, for exchange of views on counter-narcotics law enforcement cooperation. Blinken has also met, Apr 25, with Secretary of the Shanghai Municipal Party Committee Chen Jining to discuss Shanghai's exchanges and cooperation with the US side.

Globaltimes.cn Apr 27 said Chinese experts deemed Blinken's visit as "generally positive and playing a role in stabilizing relations between China and the US," but cited observers as also believing such a visit by itself cannot fundamentally change the current trend of China-US ties.

### **Dialogue with Dalai Lama's representatives only, not with Tibetan Government-in-Exile, says China**

28 April 2024, [Phayul](#)

China on Friday said it would talk only with the representatives of the Dalai Lama and not the officials of the Tibetan government-in-exile, also ruling out dialogue on the long-pending demand for autonomy for Tibetan people.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin refuted reports of back-channel discussions between the Tibetan government-in-exile and the Chinese government by categorizing the Tibetan government-in-exile, headquartered in Dharamshala, as a "separatist" entity, during a press briefing in Beijing.

Wang stated that "The so-called 'Tibetan government-in-exile' is an entirely organised separatist political group with a political platform and an agenda for 'Tibetan independence.' It is an illegal organisation that violates China's Constitution and laws. No country in the world recognises it," Wang said.

Elaborating on China's stand, Wang said the Chinese government has two basic principles when it comes to contact and talks. "First, we would only have contact and talks with the personal representative of the 14th Dalai Lama, not the so-called 'Tibetan government-in-exile' or the 'Central Tibetan Administration.' The Chinese government will not be dealing with it," he said.

"Second, any contact or talks will only be about the personal future of the 14th Dalai Lama himself, or to the utmost extent, a handful of people close to him, not the so-called 'high degree of autonomy for Tibet,' Wang added.

He further stated "We hope the 14th Dalai Lama will have a right understanding of the central government's policy, seriously reflect on and thoroughly correct its political propositions and actions, give up any activity aimed to disrupt the social order in Xizang (Tibet) and return to the right path. Only then can contact and talks be considered next," he said. China calls Tibet as Xizang in its efforts to sinicize the name of Tibet on the global stage.

The Dalai Lama has, time and again, denied aspiration for independence, and instead called for autonomy for Tibet, which has subsequently been bifurcated into various prefectures by the Chinese government after taking it over in 1951.

On Thursday, Sikyong or the political head of Tibet's government-in-exile, Penpa Tsering, told a visiting group of journalists in Dharamshala, India, "We have had back-channel (engagement) since last year. But we have no immediate expectations from it. It has to be a long-term (one)." Insisting that the talks are "very informal," the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) said, "I have my interlocutor who deals with people in Beijing. Then, there are other elements also trying to reach out to us."

His cabinet minister for Information and International Relations Minister Norzin Dolma on Thursday reaffirmed that there are back-channel talks with China that are aimed at reviving the overall dialogue process as it is the only way out to resolve the Tibetan issue.

The dialogue between Beijing and representatives of the Dalai Lama began with fact-finding Tibetan delegations visiting Tibet in 1979 and 1980, followed by exploratory talks in Beijing in 1982 and 1984. From 2002 onwards, nine rounds of discussions took place between envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and China's United Front Work Department.

Throughout these talks, the Tibetan delegation advocated for genuine autonomy for Tibet by Chinese constitutional principles and the Law on Regional National Autonomy, culminating in the presentation of a Memorandum and Note to the Chinese leadership. However, the ninth and final round of talks occurred in 2010 and 2012, the Dalai Lama's envoys resigned after the ninth round, citing the deteriorating situation in Tibet and a perceived lack of sincerity and willingness from the Chinese side.

### **Fleeing Chinese persecution: One woman's great escape from Tibet to India**

27 April 2024, [The New Indian Express](#)

*"I have left my family behind and crossed over to tell the world how difficult life is for us in Tibet. Human rights are violated with impunity," the 24-year-old Namkyi told The New Indian Express*



**DHARAMSALA:** A year ago, Namkyi left her home in Charo village, Tibet, and walked continuously for 10 days and nights along with her aunt Tsering Kyi before crossing into Nepal and finally reaching India. Now 24, she recalls how she was imprisoned for a year at the age of 15 by Chinese authorities after she and her sister protested over not being allowed to practise their faith.

"I have left my family behind and crossed over to tell the world how difficult life is for us in Tibet. Human rights are violated with impunity and we are always treated with suspicion and looked down upon. I shudder to recall the days I spent in jail when I was barely 15, men in uniform would hit us, leftover food was fed, and we slept in the cold with thin blankets. There was just nobody who could come to our rescue. I was let off after being tried but with threats and warnings," a teary-eyed Namkyi told *The New Indian Express*.

Namkyi was detained in the Tashi Gyalkaling County along with her sister. The charges levelled against her were 'separatist acts against the nation' and supporting the 'Dalai clique'.

"While in prison, we were made to undertake military training and learn about the Chinese constitution. We also worked in a labour camp making copper wires, cigarette boxes and watches. After completing our prison term, we were kept at a police station in Pema Lhathang in Ngaba County for a week. My family has been kept on a blacklist ever since," she said adding that her family was questioned after she left, and she fears they would be tortured.

After reaching India in June 2023, Namkyi has been in a transit school where she is learning the local language as her dialect isn't similar to what the Tibetans in exile speak in India.

She got an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, a few weeks after she reached Dharamsala, which she says helped her heal. "HH said that we should preserve our culture and tradition," she said.

Namkyi has gone through a lot, but her story is not any different from thousands of Tibetan refugees who have braved harsh terrain to escape Tibet. Namkyi says that she hopes to travel across the world and make people aware of the gross human rights violations in China and hopes that someday justice will prevail.

### **Chinese 'democracy activist' in Germany known to be close to Tibetan groups held for spying**

27 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)



Source of photograph: *Tibetan Review*

An aide to a German member of the European Parliament arrested for spying for China was not only a familiar presence in the overseas Chinese pro-democracy movement but had also organized a group visit to the Dalai Lama in India and was well-placed to convey sensitive information to Beijing, reported the Cantonese service of rfa.org Apr 26, citing activists.

German citizen Guo Jian, who has since been suspended from his job as an aide to far-right Member of the European Parliament Maximilian Krah, was reported arrested on Apr 22 by police in Dresden.

Federal prosecutors have said he was working for a Chinese intelligence agency, and that he repeatedly passed to it information on European Parliament negotiations and decisions in January. He is also accused of spying on Chinese dissidents and overseas activists in Germany.

Canada-based writer and activist Sheng Xue has said she had met Guo several times at pro-democracy events, where she noticed he didn't say much, but spent most of his time observing.

"He was a director of the Federation for a Democratic China and the secretary-general of the China Republican Party, so he knew all of the details of the people who attended their meetings."

"Guo Jian has been active in the Chinese democratic circle in Germany," Germany-based rights activist and journalist Su Yutong has, likewise, written in a tweet on Apr 23. Because he had served on those two posts, "people in the democracy movement trusted him a great deal," and "many well-known democrats have participated in the meetings he helped to prepare."

According to Su, Guo had also been "close to Tibetan organizations" and had led a group of people to visit Dharamshala, meet the Dalai Lama there, and shared a photo from the trip.

The report noted that an account of the 2018 visit penned by Guo was still visible on the official Chinese-language website of the Tibetan government-in-exile on Apr 25, confirming Su's claim, along with the same photo she shared of Guo with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader.

The report said that in that article, endorsed by the Central Tibetan Administration's European Liaison Office, Guo had described his visit as "a democratic

learning journey,” saying “democracy activists must communicate more with Tibetans and learn about their democratic achievements.”

Sheng sees Guo’s arrest as highlighting the enormity of China’s global reach when it comes to targeting dissidents and activists overseas.

“The Chinese Communist Party has put huge effort into bribing and infiltrating the politics, economy, media and academic life of various countries,” she has said.

Earlier in 2017, Sweden’s Security Police (SÄPO) arrested a Tibetan refugee named Dorjee Gyantsan, 49, for spying on the Tibetan community in the country as well in nearby countries, such as Denmark, Norway, and Poland, for China’s Ministry of State Security. He reported to a handler named Lei Da in meetings in Finland and Poland, where the latter worked as a secretary at the Chinese Embassy in Warsaw.

Dorjee, having fled to Nepal from Tibet in 1997, was a real refugee. He changed his name to Dorjee Gyantsan to reflect his Tibetan ancestry on his mother’s side – his previous name was Abdul Ma, after his father who was a Hui Muslim. He moved to Stockholm in 2002 after being granted refugee status by the UNHCR and offered asylum in Sweden.

Jamyang Choedon, the then head of the Tibetan community organization in Sweden, told Safeguard Defenders at that time that everyone was shocked by his arrest, and about the fact that a spy had been placed in their midst.

Dorjee was sentenced to 22 months for spying on Tibetans in Sweden for China.

After this release from Mariefreds prison in central Sweden on May 14, 2020, SÄPO placed him into custody immediately, remanded him to Sollentuna häkte, one of Sweden’s newest detention centres, just north of Stockholm, and requested his expulsion from the country on the ground that he was a threat to Sweden’s national security. He was not allowed to go home to his family, a wife, and two children.

After the Swedish Migration Board and High Court of Migration agreed in July and September, respectively, Sweden’s Home Minister approved Dorjee’s expulsion for life on Oct 22. However, because of his status as a UNCHR refugee under Swedish law, there were legal hurdles to sending him back to China. And so Dorjee remained in custody awaiting his fate amid a possible prolonged legal wrangling.

### **Calls grow for proof of whereabouts of Tibet’s missing Panchen Lama**

26 April 2024, [RFA](#)



*An exile Tibetan Buddhist monk puts a scarf in front of a portrait of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, at an event marking his birthday in Dharamshala, India, Thursday, April 25, 2024. (Ashwini Bhatia/AP)*

Global leaders joined Tibetans across the world this week to mark the 35th birthday of a revered Tibetan religious leader taken into custody 29 years ago and missing ever since.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, then just six years old, was recognized by Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, as the 11th Panchen Lama, Tibet’s second most-senior Buddhist monk, in May 1995.

Shortly after the Dalai Lama’s announcement, Chinese authorities abducted the new Panchen Lama, his family and his teacher. His whereabouts remain unknown. If alive, he would have turned 35 on Thursday.

At a commemoration event in Dharamshala, India, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the democratically elected head of the Tibetan government-in-exile, reissued a long-standing plea for information about his fate.

“Our most pressing concern is whether the Panchen Rinpoche is still alive or not,” Tsering said, using a name Tibetan Buddhists reserve for reincarnated lamas.

#### **China’s choice**

The Panchen Lama’s abduction illustrates the sensitivity of Chinese authorities to other prominent figures and their effort to control Tibetans by suppressing expressions of their Buddhist faith.

After the 1950-51 Chinese invasion and annexation of Tibet, Beijing made efforts to influence Tibetan affairs, including through the selection of a spiritual successor to the 10th Panchen Lama, who died in 1989.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama are reincarnated as children when they die, and that they have the right to select the religious leaders based on their religious belief in the principle of rebirth.

After abducting Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the ruling Chinese Communist Party installed another boy, Gyaltzen Norbu, called Gyaincain Norbu in Chinese, as the 11th Panchen Lama.

However, the Chinese government-appointed religious figure remains unpopular with Tibetans both in exile

and at home and is perceived as a “political tool” for Beijing.

The fight over the 11th Panchen Lama is likely a precursor to the battle over who will follow the 14th Dalai Lama, who is now 88 years old. China, always wary of opposition to its authority, particularly in the sometimes restive Tibetan region, says it can appoint the successor under Chinese law. Sikyong Tsering also called on the Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama to “not become a political tool of the Chinese government’s sinister motives.”

“Instead, he must recognize the unprecedented danger threatening the survival of the Tibetan people and Tibetan Buddhism, and fearlessly undertake his responsibility, and not commit any act that would hurt the Tibetans and Tibet’s spiritual and political cause,” he said.

Traditionally the Panchen Lama has played a leading role in Tibetan Buddhist scholarship as the leader of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, the second-largest city in Tibet, which has been controlled by China since 1951. The previous incarnation of the Panchen Lama passed away in 1989 at the monastery.

#### International criticism

Uzra Zeya, special coordinator for Tibetan issues in the U.S. State Department, marked the Panchen Lama’s birthday by calling on China to provide proof of his whereabouts and well-being.

The U.S. government “reaffirms our support for Tibetans to select, educate and venerate their religious leaders free of government interference,” she wrote on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter.

A U.S. State Department spokesperson told RFA that Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is on a visit to China, is expected to “raise clearly and candidly our concerns on human rights, including the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, and abuses throughout the country, including in Hong Kong and Tibet.”

“We are saddened that the PRC [People’s Republic of China] continues to separate the Panchen Lama from his community and deny him his rightful place as a Tibetan Buddhist leader,” the spokesperson said, adding that the U.S. has called on Beijing to publicize verifiable proof of his whereabouts and to allow him to speak for himself.

In Europe, Els Van Hoof, chair of the External Affairs Committee of the Federal Parliament of Belgium, and Samuel Cogolati, deputy chair, issued a statement condemning the 29-year-long enforced disappearance of the Panchen Lama and calling for his immediate release along with those of his family, teacher and other political prisoners.

Additional reporting by Tenzin Dickyi for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Tenzin Pema, Roseanne Gerin and Jim Snyder.

## Estonian Parliamentary Delegation Holds Press Conference to Express their Concerns Over State of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Lama

26 April 2024, [CTA](#)



Juku Kalle Raid, member of Estonian Parliament and Estonia’s Foreign Affairs Commission, speaking during the press conference. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

On 25 April 2024, delegates from the Estonian Parliament and Tibet Support Group participating in the official ceremony of the 35th birthday of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Lama Gedun Choekyi Nyima came together to hold a joint press conference at Tsuglagkhang.

The delegation: Juku Kalle Raid, member of Estonian Parliament and Estonia’s Foreign Affairs Commission; Jenn Polluaas, Member of Estonian Parliament and its Former Speaker; Tarmo Tamm, Member of Estonian Parliament, and Andres Herkel, Former Estonian MP and Journalist, partook in the press meeting and made an appeal to China, urging for the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Lama, while expressing their unwavering support for the cause of Tibet.

Chair of the Estonian Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet, Juku Kalle Raid, emphasised the significance of this press conference for the Estonian nation and its people. He remarked that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had visited Estonia on three separate occasions, and each time, a significant number of Estonians warmly received Him. The people of Estonia have consistently shown a deep admiration and affection for Tibet, and this enduring sentiment will continue to prevail. Given the resemblance between Tibet and Estonia for having undergone similar experiences of foreign occupation, he added, “Despite the challenging circumstances we find ourselves in, it is imperative that we continue to progress and refrain from regressing or remaining stagnant. The system deems the violation of human rights and the act of forced occupation as illegitimate.”

He further assured his commitment to amplifying voices across European countries with increased conviction and impact to seek European nations' acknowledgement on the Tibetan people's self determination. He stressed that China must refrain from meddling in Tibetan affairs to ensure the continued existence of Tibet's unique heritage.

Following the address of the delegation members, a Q&A session was held with the media representatives discussing the urgent request for China to release the 11th Panchen Lama. MP Juko Kalle Raid responded, "As His Holiness mentioned today (during their private audience with His Holiness), the issue at hand is not just about the Panchen Lama; it is a global matter involving unlawful acts, forced occupation, and the violations of human rights. We are committed to raising awareness on these issues in the European Parliament."

Additionally, he claimed, "The Upcoming election of the European Parliament is on the horizon. I have the necessary criteria to vote for individuals capable of raising these issues and concerns. It is crucial not only to address the whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama separately but also to discuss and bring to light the unlawful actions of the Chinese government." Furthermore, he made a noteworthy point about his experiences under Soviet Union rule, expressing his complete distrust of the authoritarian government, including the Chinese government.

The other members the delegation also participated in the press conference and shared their concerns over the PRC's continued repression inside Tibet.

### **Very informal talks with China on since last year, but have no immediate expectations: Tibet's govt-in-exile head**

25 April 2024, [First Post](#)

The political head of Tibet's government-in-exile Penpa Tsering has confirmed that his interlocutor are holding "very informal" talks with China but expressed there is no immediate expectation of a forward movement.

The formal dialogue process had hit a roadblock over a decade ago in view of anti-China protests in Tibet and Beijing's hardline approach towards the Buddhist region.

"We have had back-channel (engagement) since last year. But we have no immediate expectations from it. It has to be a long-term (one)," PTI quoted the Sikyong or political head of Tibet's government-in-exile Penpa Tsering as saying to journalists, insisting that the talks are "very informal".

"I have my interlocutor who deals with people in Beijing. Then there are other elements also trying to

reach out to us," the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) said.

Between 2002 and 2010, representatives of the Dalai Lama engaged in nine rounds of dialogue with the Chinese government, yielding no tangible results. However, formal discussions have been dormant since that time.

A prominent senior Tibetan leader hinted that informal discussions are underway to reinvigorate the broader dialogue, recognising it as the sole avenue to address the Tibetan situation.

Regarding the strained relations between New Delhi and Beijing after the eastern Ladakh dispute in 2020, a leader from the Central Tibetan Administration noted that Chinese aggression along the Indian border has underscored the significance of the Tibetan issue in India.

"With the Chinese belligerence on the border, the Tibetan issue also naturally gets highlighted in India," PTI quoted him as saying.

At the same time, Tsering pitched for greater support from India to the Tibetan cause.

"Now you can see that India's foreign policy is becoming more vibrant. India's influence around the world is also growing. In that sense, we would definitely want India to be a little more vocal towards the Tibetan cause," he said.

After a failed anti-Chinese uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and came to India where he set up the government-in-exile. The Chinese government officials and the Dalai Lama or his representatives have not met in formal negotiations since 2010.

Beijing has been maintaining that it freed "serfs and slaves" from a brutal theocracy in Tibet and is bringing the region on the path of prosperity and modernisation.

China has in the past accused the Dalai Lama of indulging in "separatist" activities and trying to split Tibet and considers him a divisive figure.

However, the Tibetan spiritual leader has insisted that he is not seeking independence but "genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet" under the "Middle-Way approach". Relations between the two sides strained further due to protests against China in Tibetan areas in 2008.

The Dalai Lama has been favouring resolution of the Tibetan issue through dialogue.

"I am always open to talks with China and have made it clear years ago that we are not seeking complete independence and would remain a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC)," the Dalai Lama said last year. In his remarks, Tsering suggested that less complicated relations between India and China could help in moving positively toward the resolution of the Tibetan issue.

In this context, he also highlighted the deep-rooted connection between Indian and Tibetan culture and heritage.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama keeps saying that 'I am a son of Indian soil' and that 'I'm a messenger of Indian wisdom'. So we are close to Indian culture but not to China's," he said.

### Tibetan govt-in-exile holds back-channel informal dialogue with China

25 April 2024, [Business Standard](#)



*From 2002 To 2010, Tibetan Spiritual Leader The Dalai Lama's Representatives And The Chinese Government Held Nine Rounds Of Dialogue That Did Not Produce A Concrete Outcome. No Formal Talks Have Been Held Since Then | (Photo: PTI)*

The Tibetan government-in-exile and China are holding back-channel talks, signalling signs of willingness by both sides to re-engage over a decade after the formal dialogue process hit a dead end in view of anti-China protests in Tibet and Beijing's hardline approach towards the Buddhist region.

The Sikyong or political head of Tibet's government-in-exile, Penpa Tsering, confirmed the holding of informal talks and said his interlocutor has been dealing with "people in Beijing" but there is no immediate expectation of a forward movement.

"We have had back-channel (engagement) since last year. But we have no immediate expectations from it. It has to be a long-term (one)," Tsering told a small group of journalists, insisting that the talks are "very informal".

"I have my interlocutor who deals with people in Beijing. Then there are other elements also trying to reach out to us," the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) said.

From 2002 to 2010, Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government held nine rounds of dialogue that did not produce a concrete outcome. No formal talks have been held since then.

Another senior Tibetan leader indicated that the back-channel talks are aimed at reviving the overall dialogue process as it is the only way out to resolve the Tibetan issue.

The CTA leader, referring to the frosty ties between New Delhi and Beijing following the eastern Ladakh row in 2020, said the Chinese belligerence along the Indian border highlighted the Tibetan issue in India.

"With the Chinese belligerence on the border, the Tibetan issue also naturally gets highlighted in India," he said.

At the same time, Tsering pitched for greater support from India for the Tibetan cause.

"Now you can see that India's foreign policy is becoming more vibrant. India's influence around the world is also growing. In that sense, we would definitely want India to be a little more vocal towards the Tibetan cause," he said.

After a failed anti-Chinese uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet and came to India where he set up the government-in-exile. The Chinese government officials and the Dalai Lama or his representatives have not met in formal negotiations since 2010.

Beijing has been maintaining that it freed "serfs and slaves" from a brutal theocracy in Tibet and was bringing the region on the path of prosperity and modernisation.

China has in the past accused the Dalai Lama of indulging in "separatist" activities and trying to split Tibet and considers him a divisive figure.

However, the Tibetan spiritual leader has insisted that he is not seeking independence but "genuine autonomy for all Tibetans living in the three traditional provinces of Tibet" under the "Middle-Way approach". Relations between the two sides strained further due to protests against China in Tibetan areas in 2008.

The Sikyong also mentioned that India doesn't make statements on Tibet during the periodic review of human rights in China by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

"Normally, other countries look at the leadership of India because India is one country that knows Tibet historically. In that sense we would also like them to be a little more vocal," he said.

In its talks with China between 2002 and 2010, the Tibetan side pitched for genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people in line with the Dalai Lama's middle-way policy.

The Dalai Lama has been favouring a resolution of the Tibetan issue through dialogue.

"I am always open to talks with China and have made it clear years ago that we are not seeking complete independence and would remain a part of the People's Republic of China (PRC)," the Dalai Lama said last year. In his remarks, Tsering suggested that less complicated relations between India and China could help in moving positively toward the resolution of the Tibetan issue.

In this context, he also highlighted the deep-rooted connection between Indian and Tibetan culture and heritage.

"His Holiness the Dalai Lama keeps saying that 'I am a son of Indian soil' and that 'I'm a messenger of Indian wisdom'. So we are close to Indian culture but not to China's," he said.

### **Tibetans call on India, other democratic nations to press Beijing on whereabouts of Panchen Lama**

25 April 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

The Tibetan government-in-exile on Thursday called on India and other democratic nations to press Beijing to divulge the whereabouts of Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and allow an independent fact-finding commission to examine his disappearance in China nearly 29 years ago. The demand was made at a grand event held in this Himachal Pradesh town commemorating the 35th birth anniversary of Choekyi Nyima who disappeared just three days after the Dalai Lama declared the then six-year-old to be the reincarnated Panchen Lama. A joint statement issued by leading Tibetan leaders called on foreign governments and the UN to direct their ambassadors in China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and wellbeing.

The Panchen Lama is the second most important figure in Tibetan Buddhism.

"Our most pressing concern is whether the Panchen Rinpoche is still alive or not," said Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong or political head of Tibet's government-in-exile, in presence of hundreds of Tibetans and international delegations.

"If he is presumed to be alive, has he been brought up with his parents from the age of six up till now for the last 29 years? Or had he been kept in a remote environment to become someone who can't speak even in Tibetan? How much the people around him might have abused and tortured him?" Tsering accused the Chinese government of "brazenly violating" fundamental human rights and freedom of the Panchen Lama.

In May 1995, Choekyi Nyima was identified by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, six years after the death of his predecessor. China had rejected the move and anointed its own Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu. Tsering said the Chinese authorities should immediately allow an independent fact-finding commission to get access to the Panchen Lama and that he should be given his basic human rights. The Chinese government has not yet responded clearly to questions about the whereabouts of Panchen Lama.

In 2015, it claimed that the Panchen Lama is receiving education like other children and that he does not want to be disturbed by anyone."The Chinese government has brazenly violated fundamental human rights and freedoms of Panchen Rinpoche recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama," Tsering said. In their statement, the leading Tibetan religious leaders hoped that the foreign governments, the UN and the intern

ational community will consider the "reality" of the Tibetan situation, especially on the issue of the Panchen Lama's enforced disappearance. In their statement, the leading Tibetan religious leaders hoped that the foreign governments, the UN and the international community will consider the "reality" of the Tibetan situation, especially on the issue of the Panchen Lama's enforced disappearance for almost 29 years, and as someone who has been denied with his human rights, religious freedom, rights of a child and other fundamental rights of movement," according to the statement. The leaders also urged the international community to actively call for the release of Chadrel Rinpoche, a lama of Tashi Lhunpo monastery who was the head of the search committee for the 11th Panchen Lama, as well as other Tibetan political prisoners.

"On account of the dire situation inside Tibet, Tibetans have been resorting to acts of self-immolation, the latest being a 25-year-old Tibetan singer Tsewang Norbu and an 81-year-old Taphun in 2022," the statement said. "The self-immolators have sacrificed their most cherished life in order to draw the attention of the UN and the international community to the critical situation in Tibet," it said. A high-level parliamentary delegation from Estonia attended the event. "Every Estonian feel connected with the Tibetan cause. The issue is not only about Panchen Lama. It is about protecting human rights and dignity of people," said Jukku Kalle Raid, one of the members of the delegation. He said there has been greater understanding now in Europe about challenges emanating from China. "We urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to pass a motion urging them to direct their ambassadors in China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and wellbeing," they said. The leaders also urged the international community to actively call for the release of Chadrel Rinpoche, a lama of Tashi Lhunpo monastery who was the head of the search committee for the 11th Panchen Lama, as well as other Tibetan political prisoners.

## Buddhist Leaders from Himalaya Holds Joint Press Conference to Raise Issue of the 11th Panchen Lama's Whereabout

25 April 2024, [CTA](#)



Regzin Dorjay, Acting President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, speaking during the press conference. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

Kyabje Zeekyab Tulku Jetsun Tenzin Thupten Rabgyal, Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama; Kyabje Lochen Rinpoche, Tsechokling Tulku Tenzing Gelek, Sikkim; and Regzin Dorjay, Acting President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, jointly held a press conference to call for the immediate release of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Rinpoche who was recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the occasion of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Rinpoche's birthday.

At the press meeting, Zeekyab Rinpoche read a joint appeal undersigned by himself, along with Kyabje Lochen Rinpoche of the Key Monastery in Spiti, Tsechokling Rinpoche, and Regzin Dorjay. The petition reads, "It is with great concern that we, representing four monasteries and associations from the Himalayan region and the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, make this joint appeal with following five points to the Foreign Governments, the United Nations, and the International Community: We urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to pass a motion urging them to direct their ambassadors in China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and wellbeing.

We urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to honor the 11th Panchen Lama with an award recognizing him as a victim of enforced disappearance for almost 29 years, and as someone who has been denied with his human rights, religious freedom, rights of a child and other fundamental rights of movement, residency and action.

In order to enable his early release and as a way to draw attention to his situation, we appeal the foreign governments, the United Nations and the

international community to observe the birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama.

We also urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to actively call for the release of Chadrel Rinpoche, a lama of Tashi Lhunpo monastery who was the head of the search committee for the 11th Panchen Lama, as well as the very many Tibetan political prisoners. On account of the dire situation inside Tibet, more than 150 Tibetans have been resorting to acts of self-immolation, the latest being a 25-year-old Tibetan singer Tsewang Norbu and an 81-year-old Taphun in 2022. The self-immolators have sacrificed their most cherished life in order to draw the attention of the United Nations and the international community to the critical situation in Tibet. Therefore, we urge the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to respond positively to their plea.

The aspiration of the Tibetans in Tibet is for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to be able to return to Tibet at the earliest. Therefore, we strongly appeal to the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community to consider taking concrete initiatives to support His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to enable the resolution of the Tibet-China conflict through the mutually beneficial Middle Way Approach.

The foreign governments, their citizens, the United Nations, and the international community have been consistently supporting the Tibetan people. So, we take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude. This five-point joint appeal that we have presented today are in one way also connected to the holistic wellbeing of the several million believers and followers, and therefore, is connected to democratic rights of these many individuals.

We have firm hope that the foreign governments, the United Nations and the international community will consider the reality of the Tibetan situation, particularly on the issue of the Panchen Lama's enforced disappearance case, and consider our appeals positively."

Addressing the press meeting, Regzin Dorjay, Acting President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, shared his comments on His Serenity the 11th Panchen Lama's plight and expressed dismay over the long disappearance of the latter after being recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He urged the Indian government to initiate dialogue with China concerning the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama and appealed to the United Nations to intervene in the situation. He added, "As a Buddhist leader, I highly doubt the Panchen Lama's current status, as no one has seen him since his disappearance. We must exert pressure on the Chinese government as this violates our human rights. It's a significant loss to the Buddhist community

and sends a troubling message that the Panchen Lama remains missing after so many years". Following the address, the speakers answered questions from the media personnel from Tibetan and Indian news outlets assembled at the joint press meeting.

### Statement of TPiE on the 35th Birthday of the 11th Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche Jetsun Tenzin Gedhun Yeshi Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo

25 April 2024, [CTA](#)



Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel reading the Tibetan Parliament in Exile's statement on 35th Birthday of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Rinpoche. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA

Today marks the momentous occasion of the 35th birthday of the 11th Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche, Jetsun Tenzin Gedhun Yeshi Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo (Gedhun Choekyi Nyima). It is therefore a day of great importance to be observed with celebrations by all the Tibetan people, both inside and outside Tibet. However, this day has also become one of great sadness for the people of Tibet, as it has been decades since we last saw him or heard his teachings

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was born on the 25th day of April in 1989, corresponding to the 19th day of the 3rd month in the Tibetan Earth-Serpent Year. His birth took place in Lhari Dzong, located in the Nagchu region of Tibet, to his father, Konchog Phuntsog, and mother, Dechen Choedon. The historical relationship between successive Dalai Lamas and successive Panchen Lamas has been uniquely characterized by mutual recognition of their reincarnations, with each often serving as either a teacher or a disciple to the other. In line with this unique historical bond between them, His Holiness the Dalai Lama assumed the responsibility with deep commitment to conduct comprehensive examinations of all the facts in the Panchen Lama reincarnation process for many years. This was done in strict adherence to Tibetan customs, traditions, as well as religious rituals and practices.

On the 15th day of the 3rd month in the Tibetan Wood-Hog Year, corresponding to May 14, 1995, His Holiness the great 14th Dalai Lama made an

unmistakable recognition of the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. He bestowed upon him the name Tenzin Gedhun Yeshi Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo and composed a prayer for his spontaneous fulfilment of wishes. With this proclamation, His Holiness the Dalai Lama officially recognized him as the reincarnated 11th Panchen Rinpoche.

On May 17, 1995, the Chinese Communist Party government issued an announcement filled with wild and distorted narratives, attempting to argue that the proclamation made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama was illegal and, therefore, void. Furthermore, the Chinese Communist Party government forcibly abducted the six-year-old reincarnated Rinpoche Gedhun Choekyi Nyima along with his parents, other family members, and Chadrel Rinpoche, who served as the Chairman of the committee tasked with searching for the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche. It has now been 29 years since their disappearance.

The Chinese Communist Party, which staunchly opposes and disregards any religious faith, installed another boy in place of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima solely to serve their deceitful political agenda. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Tibetan people both inside and outside Tibet, along with Buddhists worldwide, steadfastly believe that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is the true reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche. This conviction is unwavering—their faith in him remains unshakeable.

The 10th Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche, Jetsun Tenzin Trinley Jigme Choekyi Wangchug Pal Sangpo, was unwavering in his relentless commitment to the religious, political, and national causes of Tibet. On May 18, 1962, he courageously presented a seventy-thousand-character petition to Chinese Premier Zhao Enlai, detailing the atrocities suffered by the Tibetan people across their homeland. In reprisal for this appeal, the Chinese Communist Party subjected the revered Panchen Rinpoche to vicious struggle sessions and launched scathing criticisms against him. Consequently, he was imprisoned in Beijing for nearly 9 years and 10 months. Upon his release, the Panchen Rinpoche resumed his dedicated service to the religious, political, and national interests of the Tibetan people. In particular, he revitalized the preservation of the Tibetan language and script. The Tibetan people remain immensely grateful to the 10th Panchen Rinpoche for his remarkable contributions and accomplishments.

It has now been 29 years since the Communist Party of China abducted and made the 11th Panchen Rinpoche disappear at the age of six. This action by the Chinese government constitutes a grave violation of various provisions of the United Nations Convention



on the Rights of the Child. He remains, to this day, the world's youngest prisoner of conscience.

For an entire year following his abduction on May 17, 1995, the Chinese Communist Party denied holding him. In May 1996, China finally admitted to holding the young boy 'under the protection of the government at the request of his parents.' However, the Chinese government has yet to grant any access to him—neither to governmental bodies, concerned organizations, nor non-governmental investigators—to ascertain whether he is even alive.

In fact, the Communist Party of China continues to flagrantly violate human rights and religious freedom in this matter.

Concerning the whereabouts and well-being of the 11th Panchen Rinpoche and his family, pressures have been exerted by various United Nations working groups, committees, and human rights officials. These include the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Committee against Torture, among others.

Despite these efforts, the Chinese government has kept on making efforts to avoid the issue by making unsubstantiated claims. Their responses have consistently been evasive, refusing to disclose any meaningful information, which strains credibility. As a result, we do not trust the claims made by the Chinese government and believe their actions violate international laws.

The United Nations Organization, governments, international organizations, members of parliaments, the global community of Tibet support groups, international human rights organizations, and individual lawmakers worldwide have tirelessly campaigned for the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Rinpoche from his custodial detention by the Communist Party of China.

Similarly, the Central Tibetan Administration, the exile-based Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, and Tibetan non-governmental organizations have repeatedly appealed to governments and parliaments worldwide, urging their support for the immediate release of the Panchen Rinpoche, his family members, and Chadrel Rinpoche.

In this context, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile has also undertaken and will continue to undertake, international lobbying efforts, particularly for this cause, besides consistently voicing criticisms and issuing appeals to the Chinese government on numerous occasions through the adoption of official resolutions of solidarity in each session.

Remembering the debt of gratitude we owe to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his great kindness in

having undertaken the unmistakable recognition of the reincarnation of the Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche, we appeal to everyone concerned about this issue to consolidate their efforts with a reinforced sense of commitment. It is crucial to grasp the gravity of the situation in which the Panchen Rinpoche is living.

We also reiterate our call to the Chinese Communist Party government that it must be fully transparent in clearing all doubts regarding the true situation of the Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche and the members of his family.

We remain fervent in our prayers and supplication that the 11th Kunzig Panchen Rinpoche Jetsun Tenzin Gedhun Yeshe Trinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo remains in sound health conditions; that he may swiftly be released from the captivity of the Communist Party of Chinese government; that the entire communities of the Tibetan people and Buddhist peoples may definitely realize the glorious visual blessings of his golden countenance; and that he may thereby be able to resume the role that he has inherited from his predecessors.

In conclusion, we wish and pray that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the supreme leader of the Tibetan people, the refuge and protector of the sentient beings of all the three realms of existence but especially us the people of the Snowland of Tibet, may live for a hundred aeons; that all his altruistic wishes and desires may be seen fulfilled with spontaneity without any hindrance, and that the just cause of the Tibetan people may definitely be seen to prevail.

The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

25 April 2024

### Statement of the Kashag on the Thirty-Fifth Birthday of His Serenity the Eleventh Panchen Rinpoche

25 April 2024, [CTA](#)



*Sikyong Penpa Tsering reading the Kashag's statement on 35th Birthday of His Serenity the 11th Panchen Rinpoche. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA*

Today, we are gathered here to mark the special occasion of the thirty-fifth birthday of His Eminence the eleventh Panchen Rinpoche, Tenzin Gendun Yeshe Thinley Phuntsok. On this special occasion, we fervently pray that His Eminence may soon be able to break the shackles of the Chinese government's illegal captivity to freedom and assume his rightful throne of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

It is a day for us to engage in customary festivity to celebrate the Panchen Rinpoche's birthday. Sadly, the Panchen Rinpoche's whereabouts and that of his parents Kunchok Phuntsok and Dechen Choedon and Jadrel Jampa Trinley Rinpoche, who had been appointed chairman by the Chinese government's search committee, remain unknown after they were forcibly abducted by the Chinese authorities on the night of 17th May 1995, three days after His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognised him as the reincarnation of the Panchen Rinpoche.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Rinpoche, considered the sun and moon by the Tibetans, are the two foremost holders of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism in history. Not only are they the highest-ranking masters of the Gelug tradition, but they have a long history of spiritual relationship in terms of recognising each other's successive reincarnations, bestowing ordination on and transmitting teachings to each other.

Born in Amdo around the same time as His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama and after being recognised as the reincarnation of the Panchen Rinpoche by His Holiness, they met in 1952. They together visited China and India in 1954 and 1956 respectively. The turmoil in 1959 resulted in their separation, following which the Chinese government appointed Panchen Rinpoche as the deputy chairman of the so-called Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet. The Panchen Rinpoche had witnessed the atrocious land and democratic reforms, so-called "pacification" of the rebellion, destruction of monasteries, forced disrobing of monks and nuns, the massacre, imprisonment, and torture of hundreds of thousands of Tibetans, and the untimely death of many Tibetans, which brought hell on earth to Tibet. Despite the insistence of his tutor Ngulchu Rinpoche, Ngabo, Geshe Sherab Gyatso, and others, Panchen Rinpoche submitted the 70,000-character petition to the Chinese Prime Minister. As a result, he suffered immeasurable suffering in the Chinese prison for more than 14 years. Following his release from incarceration, with unshaken determination, he tirelessly advocated for the education of Tibetans, the promotion and preservation of Tibetan Buddhism and the rights of the Tibetan people.

On the Tenth death anniversary of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche in 1999, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said,

"Panchen Rinpoche has been a hero who has sacrificed his life for the cause of the Tibetan people's culture and freedom, despite threat to his life, and especially for the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa. This is indisputably well known. We can see it clearly from his 70,000-character petition. In this way, he is an extraordinary person whose aspirations have ripened in time."

"When Panchen Rinpoche was alive, I could think he would do whatever he could to help Tibet. After the Panchen Rinpoche's death, whenever there was a crisis in Tibet, I would think that it was terrible to think that Panchen Rinpoche was not there. If Panchen Rinpoche were here, I would think he would do everything possible."

On 14th May 1995, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, following the traditional Tibetan Buddhist rituals and tests, announced the unmistakable reincarnation of the tenth Panchen Rinpoche. However, three days later, the Chinese government abducted him along with his parents and since then 29 years passed and their whereabouts remain unknown.

Since 1995, the case of the enforced disappearance of the 10th Panchen Rinpoche has been consistently discussed in the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, UN Human Rights Commission's Special Investigation Group on Forced Disappearances, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Special Rapporteur on freedom of Religion or Belief, UN Convention Against Torture, and other committees. Likewise, Members of Parliaments and Governments in the United States, Lithuania, Germany, Czech Republic, Canada, Slovakia, India, Italy, Belgium, Japan, Switzerland, Taiwan, the European Union, United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, Chile, and Spain among others have expressed their serious concern about the situation of the Panchen Lama and have called for his immediate release.

The Chinese government has not responded clearly to questions about the whereabouts of Panchen Rinpoche raised by the United Nations and the international community. In 2015, the Chinese government's spokesperson claimed that the Panchen Rinpoche is receiving education like other children and that he does not want to be disturbed by anyone. The report from a five-member UN human rights experts in their meeting with the Chinese government on 2nd June 2020, the Chinese government claimed that Panchen Rinpoche received free compulsory education when he was a child, passed the college entrance examination and now has a job. Similarly, on being questioned on Panchen Rinpoche during the 45th session of the UN Human Rights Council held on 22nd September 2020, the Chinese government's representative said the Gendun Choekyi Nyima is a

common Chinese citizen and not the reincarnation of Panchen Rinpoche.

The Central Tibetan Administration has persistently called for the immediate release of Panchen Rinpoche through resolutions passed in the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and in statements of the Kashag. The offices of Tibet carried out various campaigns to garner support from the international community. Similarly, non-government organisations such as the International Campaign for Tibet and Tibet Support Groups worldwide have initiated numerous advocacy campaigns. The Tashi Lhunpo Monastery has unceasingly carried out campaigns for the release of Panchen Rinpoche. On the occasion of the 33rd birthday of Panchen Rinpoche in 2022, Venerable Zeekgyab Rinpoche, Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery along with Sikyong met with Nancy Pelosi, the then Speaker of the US Congress and Uzra Zeya, the US Special Coordinator for the Tibetan Issues. They also participated in a testimony in the Canadian Parliament on 5th May. With the coordination with the offices of Tibet, Ven. Zeekgyab Rinpoche carried out advocacy campaigns in Belgium and England, among others. Sadly, the Chinese government has paid no heed to the genuine concern and appeal of the international community and the Tibetans in exile.

Our most pressing concern is whether the Panchen Rinpoche is still alive or not. If he is presumed to be alive, had he been brought up with his parents from the age of six up till now for the last 29 years? Or had he been kept in a remote environment to become someone who can't speak even in Tibetan? How much the people around him might have abused and tortured him, just as the Chinese communist red guards subjected the 10th Panchen Rinpoche through struggle session? Has he been confined within the high walls of a Chinese prison with no communication with the outside world? Or had he been kept in solitary confinement with no sight of the sunlight, just as the 10th Panchen Rinpoche? Was he being tortured by the Chinese government with cold and hunger in a place battered with blizzard? Or is he being forced to work as a slave in a labor camp? Is the Panchen Lama, who has reached his prime age really living a healthy life? These are the vital questions which remained unanswered?

The Chinese government has brazenly violated fundamental human rights and freedoms of Panchen Rinpoche recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Moreover, it alleges that the appeals made by Tibetans in exile and the international community to restore his fundamental human rights and freedoms are disturbing him. Such tactics to hoodwink the international community is untenable. The underlying philosophy of the reincarnation system is that one must accept the concept of rebirth. The purpose of the

appearance of a reincarnation is to continue the predecessor's unfinished work. Therefore, respecting the international law, human dignity, aspirations of millions of followers of Tibetan Buddhism and their national laws, the Chinese authorities should immediately allow an independent fact-finding commission access to Panchen Rinpoche, who should be given his basic human rights.

Giving free rein to those regimes that brazenly violate international law and human rights is tantamount to neglecting the foundation of peace and justice in the world. Therefore, we appeal to all free democratic governments to take effective measures to secure the immediate release of Panchen Rinpoche. We call on the human rights organisations and supporters of the Tibetan cause to take all possible steps to appeal to their governments.

Taking this opportunity, the Kashag would like to urge Gyaltzen Norbu, who was appointed by the Chinese government, being a Tibetan and someone who had the opportunity to study Tibetan Buddhism, should not become a political tool of the Chinese government's sinister motives. Instead, he must recognise the unprecedented danger threatening the survival of the Tibetan people and Tibetan Buddhism, and fearlessly undertaken his responsibility and not commit any act that would hurt the Tibetans and Tibet's spiritual and political cause.

Finally, we pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the immediate release of His Eminence the eleventh Panchen Rinpoche Tenzin Gendun. May the two be reunited soon!

Penpa Tsering

Sikyong

25 April 2024

### **Tibetans from Europe find China's visa-free policy not so free**

25 April 2024, [RFA](#)

Four ethnic Tibetan travelers with EU passports say they were questioned for hours upon arrival in China – and two were ultimately deported – despite Beijing's visa-free policy for citizens of several European countries for visits of up to 15 days.

Belgian citizen Thubten Gyatso, who was traveling to meet family in Qinghai province via Shanghai in early April, said authorities detained him and his 6-year-old son for about 18 hours at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport, where at least six Chinese officials took turns grilling him in a small room.

"During the 18 hours, we were provided with only one meal, along with water and a few biscuits," said Gyatso, adding that he and his son could not leave the room except to use the restroom, during which they were escorted by two policemen, he said.

When authorities searched Gyatso's belongings and his mobile phone, they found pictures of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan flag – both banned in the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

Gyatso explained to them that the leader of Tibetan Buddhism – whom Beijing views as a separatist – is a “global leader, universally respected, with numerous images freely available online.”

“My reverence for His Holiness transcends boundaries, and if the Chinese authorities prohibit my entry into Tibet due to these images, I accept it without regret,” he said.

Authorities also questioned Gyatso about his escape from Tibet to India in 1994, his move to Belgium and his citizenship status there, and details about family members' professions, he said.

After 18 hours, the officials told him that he would not be allowed to return to his hometown because of the photo of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan national flag, Gyatso said.

They then made Gyatso and his son board a plane at 1 a.m. on April 4 to London, where he is currently based.

Attempt to boost tourism

In an apparent effort to increase tourism and foreign investment, China has allowed visa-free entry to travelers from five European countries — Germany, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands — for business, tourism, family visits and transit for up to 15 days until Nov. 30, 2024

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs later expanded the policy to citizens of Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Hungary and Luxembourg.

In return, the Chinese government hopes more countries will facilitate visas for Chinese citizens and work with Beijing on networks for faster cross-border travel and the speedy resumption of international passenger flights, according to a March statement by the ministry, citing Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

“This will make it more convenient for Chinese citizens to travel abroad, and make foreign friends feel at home in China,” it said.

But that doesn't seem to apply to European citizens of Tibetan ethnicity.

In March, A French citizen with family in the Tibetan Autonomous Region was denied entry into Tibet and told to redirect his travel to Chengdu to where his family members would have to travel to meet him.

Some Tibetans from Europe have been able to travel to their hometowns to meet relatives, though their families have reported similar accounts of heightened scrutiny owing to their Tibetan background.

In March, authorities at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport interrogated a Tibetan with German citizenship for six hours before letting him travel onward to visit his family in Tsolho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai province.

“Despite conducting a thorough search of my phone, other tech gadgets and luggage, authorities did not find any photos of the Dalai Lama, so they allowed me to travel to my hometown in Amdo,” he said, referring to one of the three traditional Tibetan regions. The man spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal by Chinese authorities.

But upon his arrival in Qinghai province, police subjected him to further interrogation, he added.

Translated by Tenzin Palmo and Tenzin Dickyi for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Tenzin Pema for RFA Tibetan, and by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

## Genocidal China condemned for catena of Tibet violations in US annual rights report

24 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

While highlighting China's continued genocidal crimes against the predominantly Uyghur Muslims and others in East Turkestan (Xinjiang), the US State Department's 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, released Apr 22, also cited a long list of human rights abuses against the Tibetan people enduring Chinese rule. The report underscores the need to resolve Tibet's status, said Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) Apr 23. China has condemned the report, accusing the US of slandering it.

The report shows that China violated Tibetans' human rights on a massive scale last year. These included torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, censorship, transnational repression, restrictions on religious freedom, denial of democratic elections and much more, said ICT.

The catena of violations highlighted by the report, ICT said, included the following:

- Forcing Tibetan Buddhist monks to sign documents denouncing the Dalai Lama, their exiled spiritual leader
- Disappearing and torturing Tibetan political prisoners
- Requiring job applicants to “align ideologically, politically, and in action with the [Chinese Communist Party] Central Committee”
- Severely restricting Tibetans' travel and freedom of movement
- Harassing and denying opportunities to the families of Tibetan self-immolators
- Depriving Tibetans of internet freedom, freedom of the press, the right to peacefully assemble and the right to change their government through free and fair elections
- Requiring monasteries to incorporate CCP members into their administrative systems. These members were tasked with overseeing various aspects, including monastic admissions, education, security and finances

– Criminalizing speech as spreading information “damaging to ethnic unity,” “subverting state power,” “undermining national unity” and “damaging the honor and interests of the state.”

Besides, the report shows “that China is severely violating the human rights of the Tibetan people all across the globe,” according to ICT President Tencho Gyatso. “Even inside the United States, China is discriminating against Tibetan Americans. In Tibet, China’s abuses are shocking.”

The report was released by Secretary of Antony Blinken ahead of his Apr 24-26 travel to China.

China condemned the report, calling it politically biased and ideological prejudiced. The human rights situation in China is best judged by the Chinese people, its official globaltimes.cn Apr 23 cited Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin as saying during his press briefing on Apr 23.

The US, despite having multiple affairs to cooperate and coordinate with China, is slandering the country simultaneously, the report claimed.

On the other hand, ICT says the report vindicates the ongoing move for the final passage of the Resolve Tibet Act bill which now awaits full Senate vote before it could be signed into law by President Joe Biden. The bill rejects China’s claim that the historically and ethnographically defined Tibet has been part of China since ancient times; that its legal status therefore needs to be resolved through negotiations with the Dalai Lama, Tibet’s exiled spiritual leader, and the democratically elected Tibetan leadership; and that the US should actively involve itself to help realize such a settlement.

### State Department reports show need to resolve Tibet

23 April 2024, [International Campaign for Tibet](#)



New reports from the US State Department identify a long list of Chinese government human rights abuses against the Tibetan people, underscoring the need to resolve Tibet’s status, the International Campaign for Tibet said today.

“These reports show that China is severely violating the human rights of the Tibetan people all across the globe,” ICT President Tencho Gyatso said. “Even inside

the United States, China is discriminating against Tibetan Americans. In Tibet, China’s abuses are shocking.

“With Secretary Blinken traveling to China this week, we once again call on him to raise Tibet both privately and publicly during his trip. That includes reiterating to Chinese leaders that they must take part in dialogue with Tibetan officials to resolve Tibet’s status. China’s human rights abuses against the Tibetan people cannot continue, and its occupation of Tibet must come to a peaceful end.”

The State Department released the 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices yesterday, April 22, 2024.

#### Human rights violations in Tibet

The reports show that China violated Tibetans’ human rights on a massive scale last year.

The violations included torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, censorship, transnational repression, restrictions on religious freedom, denial of democratic elections and much more.

A few of China’s abuses listed in the report are:

Forcing Tibetan Buddhist monks to sign documents denouncing the Dalai Lama, their exiled spiritual leader

Disappearing and torturing Tibetan political prisoners  
Requiring job applicants to “align ideologically, politically, and in action with the [Chinese Communist Party] Central Committee”

Severely restricting Tibetans’ travel and freedom of movement

Harassing and denying opportunities to the families of Tibetan self-immolators

Depriving Tibetans of internet freedom, freedom of the press, the right to peacefully assemble and the right to change their government through free and fair elections

Requiring monasteries to incorporate CCP members into their administrative systems. These members were tasked with overseeing various aspects, including monastic admissions, education, security and finances  
Criminalizing speech as spreading information “damaging to ethnic unity,” “subverting state power,” “undermining national unity” and “damaging the honor and interests of the state”

In addition, no international NGOs were reported to be active last year in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans less than half of Tibet. Government officials showed little cooperation or responsiveness to the perspectives of Tibetan or foreign human rights organizations.

The reports note that ICT expressed concerns over China reportedly collecting DNA from about 1 million residents of the Tibet Autonomous Region, as well as about Chinese authorities withholding household registrations from some Tibetans who traveled

abroad, particularly those who went to India, the exile home of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

**Resolving Tibet's status**

The reports arrive on the back of the US Senate Foreign Relations committee voting to approve the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act on April 16.

Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the bipartisan bill will strengthen US efforts to get China back to the negotiating table with Tibetan leaders for the first time since 2010 to resolve Tibet's status. The bill will also combat China's disinformation about Tibet.

China has occupied Tibet for over 65 years, forcing the Dalai Lama to escape into exile in 1959. Under China's iron rule, Tibet now has a total global freedom score of zero, according to the watchdog group Freedom House.

The Resolve Tibet Act can now move to the Senate floor for a vote. It already passed the House in February.

Earlier this year, members of the House also introduced a bipartisan resolution reaffirming support for Tibetans' human rights—including their right to self-determination—and condemning China's mass arrest of Tibetans who protested a destructive hydropower dam project in Derge (Chinese: Dege) county in eastern Tibet.

**Blinken's trip**

The reports also come as Secretary Blinken prepares to travel to China April 24-26.

Blinken's trip will overlap with the 35th birthday of the Panchen Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist leader whose ongoing disappearance by the Chinese government is mentioned in the reports.

ICT calls on Blinken to raise the issue of Tibet during his meetings with Chinese leaders, as well as publicly in front of the press.

The topics for Blinken to discuss include China's disappearance of the Panchen Lama; its attempts to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama; and its responsibility to resume negotiations with Tibetan leaders.

### **The Tibet Support Group of the Riigikogu will pay a visit to the Dalai Lama**

24 April 2024, [Riigikogu](#)

The delegation of the Tibet Support Group of the Riigikogu (Parliament of Estonia) will meet with Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and the community of Tibetans in exile in Dharhamsala, India.

"The Tibet Support Group in this Riigikogu is the largest of all time, and it has altogether 16 members," Chairman of the Tibet Support Group Juku-Kalle Raid

said. "It is understandable because the situation with the native language, education, politics, human rights and freedoms in occupied Tibet is extremely complicated and is becoming more and more grim every day. The cooperation between China and Russia in oppressing other nations has been gathering wind beneath its wings, Iran's actions can be added to this, and of course all this is being noticed," Raid explained.

"The programme is busy and quite likely we will get a closer look at what China has been doing in occupied Tibet," Raid said, and added that the delegation of the Riigikogu planned to meet with the Head and the ministers of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile and to visit the Tibetan parliament.

Besides the Chairman of the Tibet Support Group, the delegation also includes members of the Support Group Tarmo Tamm and Henn Põlluaas, as well as representatives of the Estonian Institute of Human Rights and the Tibetan Institute, and Estonian journalists.

The 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso has visited Estonia three times, in 1991, 2001 and 2011. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his peaceful struggle for the liberation of Tibet. He has published dozens of books about the Tibetan Buddhism, several of which have been translated into Estonian. The Dalai Lama is a title that was bestowed to Sönam Gyatso, the Head Lama of the Gelugpa school of Buddhism, by ruler of the Mongols Altan Khan in 1578. After the People's Republic of China occupied Tibet in the 1950s, the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso went into exile in India in 1959 and founded the Tibetan Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala.

### **Massive Chinese Cyber Espionage of Tibetan Diaspora Revealed**

24 April 2024, [Bitter Winter](#)

Documents leaked from private company i-Soon reveal constant attacks against emails and mobile phones of exiles from Tibet, including the Dalai Lama

We all knew that Chinese intelligence agencies keep the Tibetan and Uyghur diasporas under surveillance and harass them in many different ways. However, a data leak from the private company Shanghai Anxun Information Technology Co., Ltd. (i-Soon), which occurred on February 18, 2024, probably thanks to an anonymous whistleblower within the corporation, revealed that cyber surveillance has now escalated to a higher and much more dangerous level.

On April 18, the specialized research network Turquoise Roof released a detailed report analyzing the leaked i-Soon data, which mentions Uyghur targets but focuses on Tibetans. The leaked data reveal that

among the main clients of i-Soon are “the Chinese police, the People’s Liberation Army, the Ministry of State Security, and the Tibetan regional authorities based in Lhasa.”

The i-Soon company supports a Chinese intelligence project known as “Poison Carp,” which has targeted since 2018 the mobile phones of Tibetans and Uyghurs in exile, including the Dalai Lama himself. The data reveal that in recent years the technology supplied by i-Soon has achieved a much higher level of sophistication. Some of the vulnerabilities in cell phones operating in India and elsewhere that i-Soon exploited were previously unknown to Western experts.

In addition, i-Soon technology was used to spy on commercial email used by thousands of Tibetans abroad. It can be safely assumed that whenever Tibetans in the diaspora, including the highest figures in the Central Tibetan Administration, use non-encrypted email, their messages are known to and analyzed by the Chinese intelligence.

The data also evidenced that i-Soon technology was used to spy on pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong and even on entering the private mailboxes and cell phones of foreign officials, including some working for the police of independent Mongolia and for India’s customs agencies.

Experts warn that Chinese cyber espionage technology appears to be much more advanced than Western intelligence had previously assumed. The i-Soon company was believed to be a comparatively minor player and its technology was not properly analyzed before the February 2024 leak.

Other opponents of China may also safely assume that their cell phones and non-encrypted emails are regular targets of Chinese espionage.

### **Chinese government tries to destroy Buddhism, but Chinese people show interest in it**

22 April 2024, [The Tibet Post](#)

His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives a teaching to Mongolians, Tibetans and people from all over the world in Dharamshala on Friday. His Holiness said: “The Chinese Communists have tried to destroy Buddhism, but many other people in China are showing an interest in Buddhism. Bodhichitta is very precious. It brings peace of mind. It is a powerful way of serving others.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama begins the first day of the two-day teachings on “100 Deities of Tushita Heaven” at the request of Lamiin Gegeen Teaching Mongol Sunchoi Organising Committee and estimated 6100 of Buddhists and well-wishers from 72 countries gathered to listen his teaching, at Tibetan Main Temple

(Thekchen Choeling Tsuglakhang) in Dharamshala, HP, India on April 19, 2024.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama begins his speech by saying, “Today, we have an opportunity to hold a discourse on the Dharma. When I look back, I have tried to preserve the Dharma traditions that flourished in Tibet. I have spoken up to protect the environment, to secure peace in the world and to encourage inter-religious harmony.”

“Those of us gathered here are all followers of the same Buddha. We uphold the Nalanda Tradition, the complete teaching of the Buddha, which we kept alive in Tibet, Mongolia and the Himalayan regions. I have had dreams that clearly indicate I am an incarnation of King Trisong Detsen and I have done my best to preserve the tradition established under his direction. I would like to thank all of you for the trust you have placed in me,” the spiritual leader of Tibet told the gathering.

His Holiness addressed the congregation on the second day of the teaching and said, “Today, we have here Tibetan and Mongolian Buddhists, as well as people from elsewhere who are interested in learning about Buddhist teachings. They are attracted by their discovery that Buddhism is based on reason and has a bearing on peace of mind as well as peace in the world.”

“We Tibetans here are living in exile because we lost our country. But where we are doesn’t matter that much because we rely on the Nalanda Tradition that the great Indian master Shantarakshita established in Tibet at the invitation of King Trisong Detsen. This tradition has spread all over Tibet and the Himalayan region. Conditions may change but we have a custom of responding to each other warm-heartedly. This is something worth preserving,” the Tibetan spiritual leader said.

“Tibetans in Tibet continue to wish to follow the tradition introduced by Shantarakshita, and they place their trust in me. Not only in Tibet, but also in mainland China, growing numbers of people are taking an interest in Tibetan Buddhism and its essence—warmheartedness. Tibetan Buddhism includes a thorough understanding of the workings of the mind and emotions, which interests scientists. Other people are keen to know more about training the mind and tackling their emotions,” His Holiness explained.

“My Dharma friends, it is good to remember that we are able to study and practice now due to the traditions passed down by past masters. The Chinese Communists have tried to destroy Buddhism, but many other people in China are showing an interest in Buddhism. We Tibetans need to think carefully about the significance of sharing what we know of the Buddha’s teachings with interested Chinese,” the spiritual leader told the gathering.

He declared: "Bodhichitta is very precious. It brings peace of mind. It is a powerful way of serving others. There is the Seven-fold Cause and Effect method and the more powerful Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others approach. Taking account of all sentient beings and cultivating the mind that cherishes others more than oneself is powerfully transformative. It brings confidence and peace."

"Like us, all human beings wish to be happy. We are the same. That's why we need to be warm-hearted to everyone. Cherishing others is the source of all good qualities. Cherishing only ourselves is a source of misery. We survive due to the kindness of others, therefore, showing kindness and good heartedness are the simple key to happiness," His Holiness concluded.

### Why a Tibetan lama visiting Bhutan is significant

21 April 2024, [First Post](#)

A few years ago, during a visit to Drukyl, the Land of the Dragon, as Bhutan is locally known, I had the occasion to meet a group of Bhutanese scholars and historians belonging to a local think tank. During the course of the discussion, the term "our northern neighbour" kept coming up in the conversation.

As I was wondering why the Bhutanese were not naming China, I asked an Indian friend accompanying me, "Why does nobody name China?" My friend explained that as a 'small' (by size at least) country, Drukyl does not like even to pronounce the name of its northern neighbour.

A formula used by the 13th Dalai Lama as he was chased out of his country by a Chinese warlord in 1910 returned to my mind: "The big insect always eats small insects."

In the past, Tibet played the role of 'big insect' for Bhutan, the southern neighbour.

Until very recently, Thimphu has been extremely wary of the Tibetans; for example, the Dalai Lama has never been permitted to visit the Land of Dragon, even 65 years after he took refuge in India.

The recent visit to Bhutan by one of the highest Tibetan lamas should be seen in this background.

Sakya Trichen Known as His Holiness Kyabgon Gongma Trichen Rinpoche, the respected lama, served as the 41st head (Trizin) of the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism from 1951 until March 2017, when he handed over his responsibilities as throneholder to a successor.

His biography says: "His Holiness Sakya Trichen [former throne-holder] is renowned throughout the world for the brilliance and clarity of his teachings and his fluency and precise command of English. Receiving teachings directly from His Holiness carries a special

lineage of blessings from the founders of the Sakya Order as well as from Manjushri himself."

It speaks of an unbroken lineage dating back to 1073 AD: "Since this celestial race descended upon earth over one thousand years ago, the lineage remains unbroken to this day. Many illustrious masters and practitioners have appeared in the lineage, including the Five Great Masters of the Sakya Order."

Sakya Trichen is a member of the Khon noble family, which founded the Sakya School in the eleventh century and ruled over Tibet for centuries. The present Sakya Trichen is said to be a manifestation of Manjusri, the Buddha of transcendent wisdom.

First relocated in Darjeeling in 1959, the Lama soon shifted to Rajpur, near Dehradun, from where he reestablished the Sakya monastery and preserved his lineage's tradition.

The Visit

Sakya Trichen left India for his inaugural visit to Bhutan on April 9 this year. As he arrived at the Paro Airport, he was received by Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche, one of his foremost disciples, who apparently organised the visit.

Incidentally, Khyentse is not only a renowned religious teacher but also a filmmaker (he directed the hugely successful "The Cup"), a photographer, and a football fan. Khyentse was born in 1961 into a 'hard-core Buddhist family' in the 'staunchly Buddhist country' of Bhutan.

At the age of seven, he was recognised by the same Sakya Trichen as the main incarnation of the unrivaled Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö, the spiritual heir of one of the most influential and admired 19th century 'Rime' (non-sectarian) traditions of Tibetan Buddhism; his biographer says: "At a time when sectarianism threatened to decimate the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, in a unique collaboration with Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Taye and Chogyur Lingpa, Khyentse Wangpo was responsible for initiating and promoting 'Rime' throughout the Land of Snow, effectively breathing new life into all schools of Buddhism, and rescuing many lineages from complete extinction."

Sakya Trichen in Bhutan

On April 11 this year, Sakya Trichen emphasised the importance of devotion to Guru Rinpoche (also known as Padmasambhava) in today's world.

The next day, he met Dzongsar Khyentse and other Bhutanese Rinpoches.

Most impressive was the grand procession in Bumthang on April 13, where tens of thousands of devotees gathered to receive the teachings and blessings of the 78-year-old lama. Sakya Trichen took the opportunity to bestow a number of oral transmissions and empowerments on the local population.



On April 15, he had an audience with the King and Queen of Bhutan and some of the members of the royal family, during which the Tibetan lama was accompanied by his wife, Dagmo Tashi Lhakyi Sakya. Interestingly, on the following day, he met the Lopens of the 'Zhung Dratshang', or Central Monk Body of the Drukpa Kagyu tradition established in 1620 by Shabdrung Ngawang Tenzin Namgyel, the Founder of the Bhutanese State, who unified the country, codified the laws, and set up the dual system of governance (religious and secular).

In 1637, the Sangha moved to Punakha Dzong, which still today continues to serve as the winter headquarters of the 'Zhung Dratshang', representing more than 7,000 monks, nuns, and 'gomchens' (meditators). According to the Constitution of Bhutan, the Zhung Dratshang is an autonomous institution financed by an annual grant from the Royal Government.

The Tibetan Rinpoche had the occasion to mention the long cordial relations between the Zhung Dratshang and the Sakya lineage since the 17th century.

Why the Visit is Important

There is no doubt that the visit, though not covered by the world media, has important religious as well as political implications.

First, it showcased that despite the differences, the cultural bondage between Tibet and Bhutan remains strong; it also demonstrates the spiritual reverence for a non-Bhutanese respected lama; let us remember that Sakya Trichen belongs to a different school than the main stream Drukpa Kagyu in Bhutan.

In his speeches, the Tibetan lama lauded time and again Bhutan's spiritual atmosphere; he was happy to visit the ancient 'gompas' and enjoyed meeting the common people as well as the religious leaders of the country. He was all praise for the royal family, particularly the "Dharma Raja", the present king (the fifth of the Wangchuk dynasty), whose role was stressed time and again as pivotal to the nation's progress.

Religiously, the Sakya lama stressed Guru Rinpoche's significance; he asked the Bhutanese to pray for the Tantric master of Swat, who strengthened Buddhism in the 8th century in Tibet, and visited several places in Bhutan during his spiritual peregrinations. For the lama, Bhutan, with its ethos of Gross National Happiness, encapsulates a harmonious blend of cultural development, spiritual atmosphere, and aspiration for global peace.

The visit of Sakya Trichen to the famous Paro Taktsang, or 'Tiger's Nest', a monastery built on a cliff wall about 900 metres above Paro valley, is significant in this context as the monastery is built around a cave where Padmasambhava is said to have meditated. The sage is said to have flown there from Tibet on the back of

Yeshe Tsogyal, his consort, whom he had, for the purpose, transformed into a flying tigress.

Political Significance

But the visit also has political significance, at a time when the 'northern neighbour' repeatedly intrudes into Bhutanese territory to bully Thimphu; the visit of the Indian Prime Minister Modi in April was probably linked to this, particularly the fact that Beijing is trying to force a border agreement on Bhutan. Could a Tibetan lama siding with its former 'southern neighbour' make Beijing think twice? Not sure.

One should remember that relations have not always been cordial between the Tibetans and the Bhutanese. On April 5, 1964, Jigmie Dorji, then Bhutanese Prime Minister, was assassinated by some Bhutanese officers.

Three days after the murder, the alleged assassin, Zambay, was arrested; he apparently confessed that Bhutan's deputy commander-in-chief, Brigadier Namgyal Bahadur, had ordered him to kill the Prime Minister.

The then King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk was away in Switzerland; he returned hurriedly, but rumours had already circulated that Yankie, the Tibetan mistress of the King, was involved, being jealous of the power of the Dorji family.

Eventually, a total of 39 army officers, including Brigadier Bahadur, were arrested, and the brigadier was executed by a firing squad on May 17, 1964. Zambay was put to death on July 4, 1964.

Referring to local reports, the Bhutanese court that convicted Brigadier Bahadur noted: "There is no evidence at all that any foreign power was in any way involved... The full and entire responsibility for this plot belongs to these accused and only to them."

Though Yankie was exonerated, mistrust continued to persist.

One could mention many such incidents, showing that the suspicion between the Bhutanese and the Tibetans has continued. With this background, the visit of the Sakya Lama is a most welcome change, and it could be a powerful message to China that 'divide and rule' between traditional neighbours cannot be exploited forever.

Will the visit of the Sakya Trichen be followed by a trip by the Dalai Lama to the Land of the Dragon? It is too early to say, but it would be interesting.

### Chinese Ambassador's address at Harvard disrupted by student activists

21 April 2024, [Phayul](#)



Screen grab of a Taiwanese student activist denouncing Ambassador Xie at the event in Harvard University.

A group of student activists representing organisations like Students for a Free Tibet and the Coalition of Students Resisting the CCP disrupted an address by the Chinese Ambassador to the United States, Xie Feng, at Harvard University on Saturday. The student activists voiced their strong opposition to Ambassador Xie's involvement in the erosion of freedom in Hong Kong, the suppression of democracy, support for genocide in Tibet and East Turkestan, and advocacy for military action against Taiwan.

In a widely circulated video, a female Taiwanese student activist from Harvard is seen denouncing Ambassador Xie's complicity in tarnishing Hong Kong's freedoms and democracy, extending to similar intentions in her native Taiwan. "Xie Feng, you come to paint your delusion of a "prosperous China" when your hands are painted with blood. You robbed the Hong Kongers of fundamental freedoms and devastated their democracy. Now in my country, Taiwan, you sought to do the same."

Another female Tibetan student activist in the same video decried China's policies, asserting, "China lies, people die. 80% of Tibetan children are forced into larger colonial-style boarding schools which are aimed at destroying my Tibetan people's existence. Shame on Xie Feng. Free Tibet. Free East Turkestan. You have blood on your hands. Guilty of genocide. Shame on Xie Feng."

In another widely circulated video, a male Tibetan student activist named Topjor is seen holding the Tibetan national flag and shouting, "Free Tibet. How can you be here when the Chinese government is in direct contravention of every human rights law in the world? You are a representative of a government that advocates for genocide. The genocide of the Tibetan people, of the Uyghur people, the occupation of Hong Kong. You are a travesty. You do not deserve to be here. This is a free country. You cannot project your transnational repression in this country, in this continent. You are a shame, a stain on this institution. Shame on you Xie Feng. Shame on China."

Furthermore, the two female Harvard student activists, who were expelled from the event expressed, "We just got kicked out of our own university. Right now, Xie Feng, the Chinese Ambassador to the United States is inside giving a propaganda speech. We Harvard students went in to tell him that we will not give him this undeserved platform. Xie Feng is spinning bloody, bloody lies touting the "good China story."

In response to Ambassador Xie's address at Harvard University, Students for a Free Tibet issued a statement, asserting, "Ambassador Xie Feng's job is to spread propaganda about China and the CCP, but today the truth was louder. These student activists sent a strong message that advocates of genocide are to be welcome on our campuses and the presence of the CCP on campus is a stain on the institution."

### **G7 foreign ministers express concern over China's human rights violations in Xinjiang, Tibet**

20 April 2024, [Indian Narrative](#)

The G7 foreign ministers on Friday reiterated the importance of peace in the Taiwan Strait and expressed their concern over the human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet by Chinese authorities, Taiwan News reported citing a joint statement issued on Friday.

Regional peace and stability are "indispensable to security and prosperity for the whole international community," the ministers said, calling for a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues.

They also reaffirmed their support for Taiwan's inclusion in international organisations, such as the World Health Assembly and World Health Organisation technical meetings. There is no change in the basic position of the G7 members on Taiwan, they added.

The ministers expressed concern about China's human rights violations in Xinjiang and Tibet and pointed out the "deterioration of pluralism" in Hong Kong. They also urged China to stop activities undermining democratic institutions and the security of communities.

The joint statement follows US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink's meeting with China's Taiwan Affairs Office Deputy Director Qiu Kaiming in Beijing on April 15.

Accompanied by US National Security Council Senior Director for China and Taiwan Affairs Sarah Beran, Kritenbrink stressed the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

He also assured Beijing there was no change to the US "one China" policy, Taiwan News reported.

Despite calls from the international community for regional peace, China has continued to ramp up military activity around Taiwan. The threat of a

potential invasion of Taiwan has prompted the US to help beef up Taiwanese defence.

Most recently, US House Speaker Mike Johnson proposed the 2024 Indo-Pacific Security Supplemental Appropriations Act on April 17 that allocates USD 2 billion (NTD 65.07 billion) from the Foreign Military Financing Program for Taiwan and other regional security partners for “confronting Chinese aggression.” It also provides an additional USD 1.9 billion to “replenish defence articles and defence services” for Taiwan and other partners.

### US ‘repatriates’ lost Tibetan Buddhist relics to China

19 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The United States has on Apr 17 delivered 38 cultural relics to China as part of a repatriation deal to help Beijing retrieve artifacts that have been lost throughout the centuries. However, what is disconcerting about this “repatriation” is that “the prized haul primarily comprises Tibetan Buddhist objects spanning from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) to the Qing Dynasty (1644 -1911)” as reported by China’s official news.cgtn.com Apr 19.

The repatriation is part of a 2009 MOU between China and the US relating to the illegal importation of Chinese cultural property, so it is obviously based on the US recognition of Tibet being part of China which illegally annexed the Himalayan country in 1951.

The repatriation of the relics was made to Chinese officials on Apr 17 at a handover ceremony held at the Chinese consulate general in New York City.

During China’s invasion of Tibet from late 1949 and especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), Chinese officials ransacked monasteries and temples, as well as the Potala Palace in Capital Lhasa, and plundered them of their countless and priceless artifacts which were then said to have been smuggled to antique markets in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

Since signing the MOU in 2009, 504 lost artefacts have been successfully returned to China from the US in 15 batches, the scmp.com Apr 19 cited Li Qun, director general of the Chinese National Cultural Heritage Administration (NCHA), as saying said during the ceremony.

These unwavering efforts, coupled with intensified global cooperation, have yielded major gains, with over 150,000 artifacts retrieved through more than 300 repatriation missions since 1949, said the news.cgtn.com report.

The report cited the Chinese Society of Cultural Relics as saying that over 10 million Chinese artifacts had been displaced overseas since the Opium War in 1840, a consequence of warfare and illicit trade. It did not

refer to the Cultural Revolution period plunders of artifacts in Tibet by communist Chinese officials.

The question is, will the US continue to “repatriate” to China lost or stolen Tibetan artifacts should its Congress pass the ongoing “Resolve Tibet Act” which recognized Tibet as an occupied country and whose legal status remains to be resolved under international law?

### Dalai Lama’s sister receives award for educating Tibetans in exile

19 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)



*Sue Ott Rowlands (L), president of Randolph College, presents Jetsun Pema, the younger sister of the Dalai Lama, with the Pearl S. Buck Award at Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia, April 18, 2024.*

The younger sister of the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader the Dalai Lama has received a prestigious university award for her lifelong dedication to educating Tibetan children who live in exile.

Jetsun Pema, 84, received the Pearl S. Buck Award, with a medallion and a cash prize of US\$25,000, from Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia, on Thursday. Pema, revered by Tibetans as “Amala,” or “Respected Mother,” has built one of the most successful Tibetan educational institutions abroad — the Tibetan Children’s Villages, or TCV. The nonprofit organization cares for and educates orphaned, destitute and refugee children from Tibet. Its main facility is in Dharamsala in northern India.

She is the first Tibetan to receive the award given to women who exemplify the ideals, values and commitments of writer and novelist Pearl S. Buck, the first American woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature and a champion of women’s and children’s rights.

“We had some amazing nominations, and when the nominations for Jetsun Pema came through, it just felt like this is [someone] who exemplifies Pearl Buck and her commitments to people of Asia and the children, and her commitment to education,” college president Sue Ott Rowlands told Radio Free Asia.

Pema was also the first woman elected to a ministerial post in the Tibetan parliament-in-exile, serving as minister for education.

Officially recognized by the Tibetan parliament-in-exile as the “Mother of Tibet,” Pema worked at TCV for over five decades.

She served as president of TCV from 1964 to 2006 and was instrumental in leading the expansion of schools across India and in caring for and educating over 53,000 Tibetan children who had escaped Tibet and were separated from their families, or who were orphaned or from underprivileged families.

After she retired in August 2006, Pema continued to work on various children’s education projects, including the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education in Bangalore, India.

“This award acknowledges the efforts of not only myself but everyone who has contributed to this cause, starting from my late elder sister along with many others who have dedicated their lives to the education of Tibetan children,” Pema told RFA Tibetan in an interview.

Illustrious list

Previous award winners include former Irish President Mary Robinson, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, former First Lady of Egypt Jehan Sadat, former Philippines President Corazon Aquino, U.S. architect, designer and sculptor Maya Lin, and American author Maxine Hong Kingston.

Pema said she would donate her award money to TCV. “The education we have given to our young people has benefited them greatly and has empowered them ... and that is encouraging,” Pema said, addressing a gathering of several hundred people, including former students and Tibetans who had traveled from other parts of the country to be at the award ceremony.

At the event, Pema spoke about the mandate she received from the Dalai Lama to ensure Tibetan children received a good education and care when she took over the work initiated by her late sister, Tsering Dolma Takla.

Takla, the elder sister of the Dalai Lama, first volunteered in May 1960 to care for over 50 Tibetan children whose parents were working in road construction camps in north India, creating a nursery home for them, which later expanded into a series of over 15 TCV schools across India under Pema’s leadership.

Pema has received several global honors, including the World’s Children’s Prize for the Rights of the Child in Sweden in 2006, the Maria Montessori Award in Italy in 2010, and a UNESCO Medal in 1999.

She also received the esteemed Nari Shakti Puraskar award in 2018 from the Indian government, which recognizes women or institutions dedicated to advancing women’s empowerment.

Translated by Tenzin Dickyi with additional reporting by Passang Dhonden for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Tenzin Pema for RFA Tibetan, and by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

### Former political prisoner shares testimonial of her suffering in Chinese prison

19 April 2024, [Phayul](#)



Former Tibetan political prisoner Namkyi speaking at the press conference at the CTA compound in Dharamshala on April 19, 2024 (Photo/CTA)

Former Tibetan political prisoner Namkyi, who escaped into exile last year shared a gripping testimonial of her suffering and persecution under Chinese occupation in Tibet, at a press briefing on Friday, at the exile Tibetan government’s compound here.

Speaking to reporters, Namkyi recounted her upbringing in Charo village, Ngaba County, eastern Tibet, within a nomadic family where she shared the sorrow felt by many Tibetans over the forced occupation by “Red China” and the subsequent exodus of spiritual leaders such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Namkyi detailed the challenges faced by Tibetan activists in Tibet, including restrictions on movement and suppression of cultural and religious practices by the Chinese government. She expressed concerns over whether the international community fully grasped the plight of Tibetans under Chinese rule.

She recalled the events of October 21, 2015, at 3 pm Beijing local time when she and her companion held portraits of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as they marched along Ngaba’s ‘martyr’s roads’, advocating for the freedom of Tibet and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Eminence Kirti Rinpoche. Within minutes, police officers emerged, seizing their portraits.

Despite resistance, they were eventually subdued, handcuffed, and taken to Ngaba County’s detention centre. Subsequently, they endured seven months of detention before facing an unjust three-year prison sentence on false charges of separatism. Their time in

a prison in Sichuan Province was marked by forced labour and discrimination.

Namkyi continued, describing the subsequent events of her arrest, detention, and trial, vividly recalling the interrogations, physical abuse, and unjust sentencing she and her sister endured. Their time in prison was further worsened by conditions such as malnutrition, cold, and discrimination, she said.

She further stated, "On 21 October 2018, we were released from prison after completing the prison term and kept at the police station of Pema Lhathang in Ngaba County for a week as concerned authorities called upon our family to write a promise letter for our release. My family was put on a blacklist because my elder brother was also in prison. Despite our release, our expressions and movement were severely restricted, putting anyone we were in contact with at risk."

Last year, in 2023, Namkyi started her journey of escape with her cousin sister Tsering Kyi without informing anyone. They arrived in Dharamshala and reached the reception centre in Dharamshala on 28 June last year.

### **Senators Young, Merkley celebrate committee passage of bill promoting peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict**

18 April 2024, [Giant RealRadio WTCA](#)

U.S. Senator Todd Young (R-Ind.), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) praised committee passage of the bipartisan, bicameral Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act. The legislation strengthens the United States' policy to promote dialogue between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Dalai Lama to move toward a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Tibet and the PRC. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act previously passed the House of Representatives, and the next step is a vote in the full Senate.

"The Chinese Communist Party's aggression towards Tibet is self-serving, with negotiations and even the very definition of Tibet on the CCP's terms. We must refresh U.S. policy towards Tibet, and push for negotiations that advance freedoms for the Tibetan people and peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. I am pleased by this vote, and I urge the full Senate to pass this bipartisan legislation and demonstrate America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable," said Senator Young.

"All peoples around the world have inalienable rights to freedom and self-determination. These principles must guide the actions and relationships of the United States around the world, especially in the face of our

biggest adversaries. The People's Republic of China continues to ignore the basic rights of the Tibetan people, and the status quo is not tenable. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act sends a straightforward message to the Chinese government: stop spreading disinformation about Tibet and its history and enter sincere negotiations over Tibet's status. We must get this bipartisan bill over the finish line because the people of Tibet deserve a say in how they are governed," said Senator Merkley.

In addition to Senators Young and Merkley, the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act was cosponsored by U.S. Senators Ben Cardin (D-Md.), Mike Braun (R-Ind.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Christopher Coons (D-Del.), Mitt Romney (R-Utah), Tina Smith (D-Minn.), Tim Kaine (D-Va.), Jim Risch (R-Idaho), and Mike Crapo (R-Idaho). The House version of the bill was led by U.S. Representatives Jim McGovern (D-MA-02) and Michael McCaul (R-TX-10).

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Calls on Legislators, Addresses Tibetan Community in Vermont and Boston**

18 April 2024, [CTA](#)



Following the conclusion of his official engagements in Toronto and Montreal, Sikyong Penpa Tsering proceeded with his official engagements in North America, specifically in Vermont and Boston. During this leg of his visit, he participated in public talks, engaged with young individuals, and held meetings with congressional and legislative representatives.

In the morning of April 12, Sikyong met with Senator Peter Welch, David Scherr, the State Director at the Office of Representative Becca Balint, and staff from Burlington Mayor Emma Mulvaney-Stanak's office in the US state of Vermont. During these meetings, Sikyong conveyed the urgent situation in Tibet,

highlighting China's efforts to eradicate Tibet's distinct culture, identity, and assimilate the Tibetan people. Following these meetings, Sikyong interacted with local Tibetan youths, discussing Tibet's historical significance, the Tibetan plateau's history, as well as its natural environment.

Later in the evening, Sikyong was welcomed in the traditional Tibetan manner, with a cultural dance performance by the regional Tibetan association. After a summary of activities by the association's president, Tsering Yangkyi and a welcome speech by Representative Dr. Namgyal Choedup of the Office of Tibet, North America, Sikyong addressed the local Tibetan residents gathered there.

Sikyong commended the efforts of the regional Tibetan association in organising meetings with officials and local authorities, despite their small team, appreciating their efficiency during the brief duration of his visit. He outlined the primary objectives of his North America visit, including discussing the responsibilities of the Central Tibetan Administration and China's policies aimed at assimilating Tibetan religion, culture, and language, along with the current situation in Tibet. Sikyong attributed the increased attention to the Tibetan cause in recent years to the influence of His Holiness, and he explained the policies and activities of the current Kashag, followed by an open Q&A session with the public.

On 13 April, Sikyong arrived in Boston, where he delivered a speech to local Tibetan residents at the regional Tibetan assembly hall. He was warmly welcomed, followed by a recap of activities by the President of the Regional Tibetan Association of Boston, Yama, and a welcoming address by Representative Dr. Namgyal Choedup.

During his speech, Sikyong reflected on his extensive travels over the past two years, visiting 24 countries on official visits, and underscored the unique nature of the exile government, which no other refugee community possesses, attributing this achievement to His Holiness's visionary leadership. He discussed the priorities and policies of the 16th Kashag, strategies for enhancing the stability and efficiency of departments within the Central Tibetan Administration, and the Middle Way Policy. Afterwards, Sikyong participated as the chief guest in a fundraising dinner organised by the regional Tibetan association.

In the morning of 14 April, Sikyong Penpa Tsering engaged in an interactive session with Tibetan youths in Boston, focusing on topics such as Tibetan history and environmental issues to enrich their knowledge and foster engagement. Following this session, he promptly departed for Washington DC, where he met with officials from the State Department and members of the legislative assembly.

## Report: Government-linked hackers in China target exiled Tibetan leaders

18 April 2024, [VOA News](#)

A new report by a team of Tibet-focused cybersecurity analysts details how hackers with links to the Chinese government are using cyber espionage tactics to target members of the Tibetan government-in-exile and the office of the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

"Spyware-as-a-Service," which was released Thursday, uses information from an enormous data leak in February from Chinese cybersecurity firm I-Soon. According to the report, hackers have been targeting the mobile phones of officials from the Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA, since 2018 and the large amount of information Chinese hackers have collected could pose significant security risks to them and those in their social networks.

That targeting, "represents a significant shift in the tactics used by threat actors, signaling an adaptation to modern communication methods and an understanding of the increasing reliance on mobile devices for both personal and professional activities," the report said. Tibet-focused research network Turquoise Roof published the report.

The February data dump was a treasure trove of information about China's cyber espionage and other activities. Leaked documents revealed that private firm I-Soon's clients include the Chinese police, China's Ministry of Public Security, and the People's Liberation Army. The leaked information also detailed tools and tactics used by the organization and connections among hacking groups in China.

'Tip of an iceberg'

These new findings provide a glimpse into "the sprawling cyber espionage apparatus" that China has used to target ethnic minorities over the last few decades, says Greg Walton, senior investigator at U.K.-based security consulting firm Secdev Group.

"While the revelation is only the tip of an iceberg, it's a very revealing one," said Walton, who is the report's author.

"The findings help us learn more about the opaque system [that the Chinese authorities] have been using to target the West," he told VOA by phone.

One leaked white paper described in the report focused on how I-Soon used compromised e-mail inboxes of exiled Tibetan authorities to demonstrate how their system can satisfy the demand of China's intelligence agencies to "mine through substantial volumes of intercepted email data."

"The platform is engineered to facilitate investigations into an individual's 'interpersonal network' and to intricately map the social networks of targeted individuals," the report wrote.

Walton said the white paper offers rare insight into the “capabilities of the Chinese party-state.”

“[Since] we know that I-Soon has been selling their services to Chinese intelligence agencies, including the public security bureau in Tibet, we make the point in the report that the harvested social network analysis from the exiles’ inboxes could be sold to the authorities in Tibet,” he told VOA.

In his view, Chinese authorities could incorporate “the web of personal and professional connections” identified from the compromised e-mail inboxes of exiled Tibetan officials into the big data policing platform that they use to crack down on the local community in Tibet.

“The platform is instrumental in a campaign that criminalizes even moderate cultural, religious expressions, language rights advocacy and surfaces links to exile Tibetan networks,” Walton said.

In response to the report’s findings, the Chinese Embassy in Washington said Beijing has “always firmly opposed and cracked down on all forms of cyber hacking” according to law.

The accusation from the report “is a complete reversal of black and white,” Liu Pengyu, the spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy, told VOA in a written response.

A long history of threats from Chinese cyber espionage The CTA and the Tibetan diaspora community have been targets of Chinese cyber espionage for more than a decade. In 2008, an extensive cyber operation called “GhostNet,” which is connected to a specialized division of the People’s Liberation Army, caused serious problems across the Tibetan community.

Between November 2018 and May 2019, some senior members of Tibetan groups received malicious links in tailored WhatsApp text exchanges with operators disguised as NGO workers and other fake personas, according to research conducted by the University of Toronto’s Citizen Lab.

According to Turquoise Roof’s report, the escalation of cyber operations against the CTA by China’s military and intelligence services is “in step with” the exiled Tibetan government’s increased investment in its digital presence and reliance on digital systems for interacting with the diaspora community.

Some Tibetan organizations have been conducting training to enhance their resilience against Chinese cyberattacks.

“The Tibet Action Institute provides tech assistance to exiled Tibetan organizations and they often teach us about the security measures we can adopt to prevent our accounts or digital devices from being hacked,” Ngawang Lungtok, a researcher at the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, told VOA by phone. The CTA has also been focusing on upgrading its technical capacity and offering orientations to all Tibetan officials in recent years.

“The Tibetan Computer Resource Center offers training and workshops regularly,” Tenzin Lekshay, the spokesperson of the CTA, told VOA in a written response.

Walton adds that the CTA even sent people to the United States for specialized training.

“The CTA has some good people trained in the U.S. and is now in the position to help tackle risks extended from Chinese cyberattacks,” he said.

The report says the I-Soon leak offers significant insight into the Chinese authorities’ use of AI-driven surveillance systems to “enforce political controls” within and beyond its border. It also showcases Beijing’s efforts to “refine its espionage capabilities” by using novel intelligence tactics against vulnerable populations like the Tibetans before global deployment. Considering the impact of cyber espionage on the Tibetans, Walton said he believes investing in the protection of vulnerable populations from digital transnational repression “is an example of” aligning traditional security with human rights advocacy.

### Why China is blocking the Dalai Lama’s Sri Lanka visit

18 April 2024, [First Post](#)



The Sri Lankans have been trying to have the Dalai Lama visit since January 2023

The—70 per cent plus Buddhist—Sinhala population of Sri Lanka fervently wants to welcome the 87-year-old Dalai Lama into their country at the earliest. A group of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks who met the Dalai Lama in Bodh Gaya in 2022 invited him to come.

Dalai Lama is revered by his direct followers and other Buddhist sects as the 14th reincarnation of the Buddha, Avalokiteshvara. The current monk was anointed at the age of 15 in 1950, the very year the Chinese took over Tibet.

The Sri Lankans have been trying to have the Dalai Lama visit since January 2023. They are trying once more now as fresh efforts intensify on the open invitation from the various Buddhist monasteries. Many Sri Lankan Buddhists feel the Dalai Lama can help sort out the island nation’s economic woes with his wisdom and blessings.

Leading Sri Lankan Buddhist leader Waskaduwe Mahindawansa went on television to state that the Chinese had pressured the Sri Lankan government to prevent the visit.

The Chinese, ever political and strategic, want the Sri Lankan Buddhists to team up with Gandharan Buddhists in Pakistan rather than the Indian-orders that are opposed to the Chinese. And certainly, they do not want the Dalai Lama to visit and be honoured. The impediment to a Sri Lankan visit comes every time by way of China. Beijing's debt restructuring will play a crucial role in obtaining further soft loans from the IMF. This has tied the hands of the Sri Lankan government.

The Chinese still regard the elderly Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist with massive influence, a living and highly popular symbol of resistance to the Chinese takeover of Tibet.

One of the thorny problems stretching beyond the present incumbent is that the Buddhist monasteries in Tawang, Leh, and elsewhere in India do not agree that the Dalai Lama's successor can be chosen by the Chinese. The Buddhists everywhere are furious at the constant insults hurled by the Communist Chinese against the Dalai Lama, who do not recognise him as a spiritual leader at all, calling him a 'wolf' in monks robes.

The internal facts in Tibet are quite damning. Since 1949, over 1.2 million Tibetans have been killed, over 6,000 monasteries destroyed, and thousands of Tibetans imprisoned. The Tibetans are being relocated to dense city enclaves in Lhasa; their smart phones are monitored; and the Mandarin language is being pushed in place of the Tibetan.

With all this and 74 years of effort, including much infrastructure development and the relocation of ethnic Han Chinese to Lhasa, the Chinese are still not the masters of Tibetan hearts and minds. Similar problems of non-acceptance of unbridled repression plague the Communist CCP in Xinkiang, Hong Kong, against dissidence of any kind in the country, and of course, Taiwan.

The Chinese authorities bristle at everything the Dalai Lama says and does, and are disturbed every time the Dalai Lama travels within India or internationally. Still, the Dalai Lama has been very successful at promoting the Tibetan cause. The Chinese don't like the fact that the Dalai Lama is completely free in India. They objected strongly to the Dalai Lama's visit to the Tawang Buddhist monastery and other parts of Arunachal Pradesh as a state guest in 2016. China, typically and audaciously, claims 90,000 sq km of the state, even today as 'South Tibet'. China is firmly opposed to the Nobel Laureate and international apostle of spiritual optimism. The fact that the young Lama escaped to India, which gave him sanctuary, is a

constant thorn in the flesh of the Chinese side. Even today, Tibetans in occupied Tibet are rarely given Chinese passports to travel. They are specifically discouraged from visiting the Dalai Lama in India, more so since 2012. There is also a ban on openly worshipping him.

China handed out brownie points to relatively smaller countries like South Africa, a part of BRICS, when it was far more important and influential, for blocking a Dalai Lama visit in 2011.

This was widely criticised internally. The Lama was to go to Cape Town on the occasion of the 80th birthday of fellow Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu, at his invitation.

The Dalai Lama did visit South Africa to meet with Nelson Mandela in 1996. But he was prevented from doing so again before the 2010 World Cup. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman in 2011, Hong Lei, laid out the unrelenting policy on the venerable monk when he said, 'China's position of opposing the Dalai Lama visiting any country with ties to China is clear and consistent'.

When the Dalai Lama met Mexican President Felipe Calderon in 2011, China said it had 'harmed Chinese-Mexican relations'. Likewise, Beijing was critical of President Barack Obama receiving the Dalai Lama in the White House in July 2011. However, Presidents Clinton and George W Bush also met the Dalai Lama, ignoring Chinese protests. As did Angela Merkel of Germany, Nicholas Sarkozy of France, and Gordon Brown of Britain.

Much was done to impact the careers of Hollywood stars like Richard Gere by backing Tibetan aspirations and regularly visiting McLeod Ganj.

The Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959 on muleback and on foot, just ahead of the Chinese takeover of his Potala Palace in Lhasa. This followed a failed Tibetan uprising against the Han Chinese occupation of Tibet. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in an admirable act of idealistic courage, allowed the young Dalai Lama and his small band of fellow monks and followers refuge at Dharamshala/McLeod Ganj, in what is now Himachal Pradesh. India signed a document recognising China's takeover of Tibet in 1954.

Yet, in hindsight, Nehru may have had to pay for harbouring the Dalai Lama, by way of the unprovoked Chinese invasion of NEFA in 1962. Of course, it wasn't the only reason. However, it was a shock and humiliation that Nehru wasn't able to survive for long. Soon, a nucleus of exiled Tibetans and enough monks to form a spiritual organisation grew around the Dalai Lama. More and more Indian and international devotees and admirers made the trip to McLeod Ganj as the time wore on. For the Tibetans trapped on the other side, in Chinese-occupied Tibet, the Dalai Lama has remained a symbol of hope for 'genuine



autonomy' instead of subjugation, over the years, since 1950.

A Tibetan government in exile formed in McLeod Ganj holds elections and thrives to this day, frequently appearing to give its views on Indian television. Its stated purpose is to one day see their way to a free Tibet, or at least a truly 'autonomous' region.

Many of the Tibetans and their descendants have integrated into Indian society, marrying other communities, forming clusters and colonies in different parts of the hills and plains of India.

The Indo-Tibetan Border Force is a formidable military presence all along the LAC with China and is being steadily expanded. By way of contrast, the Han Chinese have had great difficulty motivating the natives of sparsely populated Tibet to work with them in any capacity or help their efforts to man and defend the LAC with India.

Instead, the Chinese have been forced to use Han conscripts from the plains, ill-suited to the rare air and high altitude. Most, including the senior officers, fall sick, and have to be frequently replaced.

China puts out a different development narrative with impressive statistics. Tibet now has a prosperous economy with a GDP of \$31 billion and a per capita income of \$8,000. This is twice that of Sri Lanka and four times that of India, they state. Life expectancy is now 72.19 years. There are 46,000 monks and nuns in over 1,700 monasteries in Tibet.

Critics say these statistics are fudged and a debt-driven narrative. Most of all, there is no freedom of religion. The effort to nurture a phoney Buddhist ethos is to legitimise Chinese efforts to name a state-sponsored Dalai Lama successor.

The writer is a Delhi-based political commentator. Views expressed in the above piece are personal and solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect Firstpost's views.

### **Bill mandating US gov't help to resolve Tibet's legal status set for full Senate vote**

17 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

A bill mandating the US government to pressure China to negotiate with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected exile Tibetan leadership to reach a settlement on the legal status of Tibet has moved closer to being enacted into law with its clearance by a Senate committee on Apr 16, said Washington-based Tibet campaign group International Campaign for Tibet (ICT). The bill also recognizes Tibet as an occupied country and will require the US government to combat China's propaganda disinformation campaign on this issue.

The bipartisan "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act" was approved at the Senate

Foreign Relations Committee at its business meeting on Apr 16, 2024. The development has coincided with the visit of the executive head, Sikyong Mr Penpa Tsering, of Dharamshala-based Central Tibetan Administration, which is effectively the Tibetan government in exile.

The main Agenda of Sikyong Penpa Tsering's visit to Washington, DC, is to meet with administration officials as well as members of Congress to push for the passage of this legislation which now heads to the full Senate for final debate and possible approval before President Joe Biden could sign it into law, said the ICT on its [savetibet.org](#) website Apr 16.

Speaking to the media after the approval, the Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ben Cardin, acknowledged his discussion with the Tibetan Sikyong the night before and said the bill's language was precisely the same as that which the Lower House had approved, according to the CTA on its [Tibet.net](#) website Apr 17.

The bill was earlier introduced by Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas, and Sens. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Todd Young, R-Ind in the two chambers of the US Congress. It was passed by the House of Representatives on Feb 15.

Known as the "Resolve Tibet Act" in short, the bill seeks to make it a US position that the dispute between Tibet and China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, by peaceful means through dialogue without preconditions.

It also states that the Chinese government's disinformation campaign, claiming Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times", is historically inaccurate. For this purpose, the US government is urged to use public diplomacy efforts to "counter disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including "disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama."

In this connection, the State Department's special coordinator for Tibetan issues is sought to be empowered to work to ensure that US government statements and documents counter Beijing's disinformation about Tibet.

The bill also encourages Washington to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

It also encourages Beijing to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

Significantly, the proposed legislation makes it clear that Tibet includes not just what China calls Xizang or Xizang Autonomous Region, but also the Tibetan

regions that currently constitute or form parts of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

### **US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Approves Resolve Tibet Bill, the Committee's Chair Assures His Support for the Bill's Passage in Senate**

17 April 2024, [CTA](#)



*In photos: Senator Ben Cardin (L), Senator Jeff Merkley (C), and Senator Todd Young (R)*

The Resolve Tibet Bill, S. 138, "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act", was unanimously approved on 16 April 2024 by the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Speaking to the media following the Committee's session, the Chairman of the Committee, Senator Ben Cardin, acknowledged his discussion with Sikyong the night before regarding the procedure to be adopted in connection with this bill and said the bill's language was precisely the same as that which the Lower House had approved.

According to the Tibetan language broadcaster, immediately after the bill was unanimously approved, Senator Jeff Merkley (Democratic Party) and Senator Todd Young (Republican Party) explained the Committee's approval of the bill was a further confirmation of the United States' policy of advocating peaceful dialogue between His Holiness the Dalai Lama or His representative and the People's Republic of China to resolve the Tibet-China conflict. They further stated the bill had already been passed in the US House of Representatives and could now move to the Senate floor.

Representative Dr Namgyal Choedup delivered this great news to the members of North American Tibetan Associations and extended his appreciation on behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration for their commitment to seeking support from the Senators of their respective states and called for continued effort. While ensuring that the Office of Tibet and the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) have been doing their best, the Representative apprised Sikyong has been actively involved in meetings with lawmakers and government officials during this ongoing visit in the US to advocate for the passage of the bill. He further acknowledged Sikyong Penpa Tsering and ICT Chair Richard Gere's successful meeting with the

Chairman of the United States Senate Committee, Senator Ben Cardin, during which the latter affirmed his firm support for the bill's passage.

### **China prevents exposure of human rights violations in Tibet and Xinjiang in foreign media**

17 April 2024, [Colombo Gazette](#)

As Beijing increases its repression of ethnic minorities in China to establish Han domination, the Chinese Communist Party is also devising numerous ways to ensure that the overseas media cannot expose this ongoing violation of human rights behind the bamboo curtain.

The Chinese media is highly censored. To project the false image of China as a progressive country, the mandarins of the CCP must prevent all these atrocities from being exposed in newspapers, news agencies and televisions in other countries.

From the experiences of foreign journalists reporting from Tibet and Xinjiang, the land of ethnic Tibetan and Uighur people, respectively, now under the illegal control of China, and from research into how the CCP controls the foreign media, it transpires that there are essentially two ways of doing this.

One is to stop the flow of information to the outside world from these regions simply by preventing foreign reporters from visiting and operating in these areas. The other is to misguide the foreign media by planting fake news, by ideological brain-washing of journalists in different countries and by intimidating them with draconian legislations purportedly with extra-terrestrial reach.

"Tibet is one of the most restrictive places in the world for Press freedom, with information online and offline tightly controlled and censored by the Chinese government," says a research paper by Sage, a global academic publisher of books and journals. Special restrictions exist on foreign correspondents who travel to the Tibet Autonomous Region and report to Tibetan areas.

Tibetans who act as sources are persecuted. Requests from the Foreign Correspondents Club of China for visits to Tibet are routinely denied. Tours of foreign correspondents to the TAR, few and far between, are group trips closely supervised and coordinated by the authorities.

To prevent the filtering out of the real situation in Tibet to other countries, measures like network shutdowns, internet filtering, social media censorship, confiscation of satellite dishes and shortwave radio signal jamming are adopted. The authorities persecute Tibetans who provide journalists with assistance without official permission.

A well-known case was of Tashi Wangchuk, Tibetan herder-turned-shopkeeper who in 2018 was

sentenced to five years in prison for ‘inciting separatism’ for having talked to a New York Times reporter in Beijing in 2015. “Some of my sources have been prosecuted and sentenced from three to 16 years. A lot of them have been imprisoned,” a Tibetan journalist in exile has been quoted.

Internet filtering and radio jamming help Tibetan news groups reach Tibetan audiences. Frequencies are jammed, and the authorities confiscate satellite dishes. Websites face ‘Disturbed Denial of Service’ attacks, which typically occur around sensitive political anniversaries of Tibetan people.

The experience of Albanian-Canadian historian and journalist Olsi Jazexhi in 2019, as narrated in Al-Jazeera, is a telling story of how China prevents the filtering out of news to the outside world of violation of human rights inflicted on the Uighur Muslims. Jazexhi had joined a media tour of foreign journalists, mostly from Muslim countries, to the Xinjiang region. “I wanted to defend the Chinese government,” he recalled. But he quickly understood that defending the Chinese narrative was a far more difficult task than he had anticipated. They were taken to one of the so-called vocational training centres outside the regional capital of Urumqi. “They said it was like a school but it was clearly a high-security site in the middle of the desert,” Jazexhi said.

“They also told us that the people staying there were not allowed to leave. So it was obviously not a school but a prison and the people there were not students but prisoners. They (the Chinese hosts) were portraying the indigenous people of Xinjiang as immigrants and Islam as a religion that was foreign to the region. It was incorrect.”

Such media tours, organised at the behest of Chinese President Xi Jinping, are a common tactic employed by countries with something to hide.

Associated Press journalist posted in Beijing Yanan Wang has narrated the subtle ways of the propaganda department of the Chinese government to control reporting in the Uighur Autonomous Region.

“At the airport we had a welcoming committee from the local authorities. They offered us drives in their car and plenty of hospitality. From the moment we arrived, we’re followed by at least one car. We were taking photos, and someone suddenly appeared on the scene to say he was a ‘concerned citizen.’

He said taking photos was an infringement of his privacy rights. He had this long monologue about privacy rights and about how it wasn’t right for us to take photos of him without his knowledge. We asked him: ‘Well, where are you in these photos?’ He’d go through all of them. He said we had to delete all of them. ‘This is my brother,’ or ‘This is my place of work, you have to delete it.’ They posed as concerned citizens to obstruct reporting.”

A BBC team had a harrowing experience on a visit to the Uighur Autonomous region. “Over a period of less than 72 hours in Xinjiang we were followed constantly and on five separate occasions approached by people who attempted to stop us from filming in public, sometimes violently. In at least two instances, we were accused of breaching the privacy of these individuals on the basis that their attempts to stop us had led them to walk in front of our camera.

Uniformed police officers attending these ‘incidents’ twice deleted our footage and on the other occasion we were briefly held by local officials who claimed we had infringed a farmer’s rights by filming a field.” The BBC team concludes: “China’s propaganda efforts may be a sign of just how damaging it believes the coverage of Xinjiang has been to its international reputation.” Besides expelling foreign correspondents from China, the communist regime is now also trying to influence in its favour coverage in the international media, especially in countries where it has invested in Belt and Road Initiative projects. China regularly conducts exchange programmes for foreign reporters, training for journalists in Chinese cities and regular discussions with foreign journalists in Chinese media unions.

Media contents with official propaganda are provided free to foreign journalists. Bilateral cooperation agreements with media outlets are launched at local levels, and supplements are run in respectable foreign publications.

In 2019, when Italy signed the BRI agreement with China, President of China Xi Jinping signed a series of agreements with Italian media companies. The Xinhua Italian News Service was launched in a MoU between the Italian news agency ANSA and the Chinese news agency Xinhua.

Public broadcaster of Italy RAI reached agreements with China Media Group. “An expanding presence in Italian media gives Beijing a platform to spread its official view while potentially inhibiting more critical debates from emerging,” a London-based Henry Jackson Society report says. ANSA ended the agreement in 2022.

In poorer nations the infusion of money is often inducement enough. “A desk, a telephone and regular pay are all positives in countries where these are luxuries,” Jeremy Dear of the International Federation of Journalists has been quoted.

Fake news on China is also planted in foreign media outlets, taking advantage of the latest communication technologies. Appeals to ideological beliefs are made to journalists to self-censor reports critical of China in cities with a communist tradition.

When nothing works, Beijing resorts to threats against foreign journalists to make them fall in line. In December 2023, China placed sanctions on Los Angeles-based research and data analytics firm

Kharon and its two lead analysts, according to an Al Jazeera report.

They were barred from entry into China. Assets or property owned by the company and the two analysts would be frozen. Organisations and individuals in China were prohibited from conducting transactions or cooperating with them. The company had reported extensively on human rights abuses against Uighur and other Muslim groups.

China uses the National Security Law of Hong Kong to threaten foreign journalists with arrest and prosecution if they are in a Chinese jurisdiction, even for transit. On March 13, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government threatened the London-based Hong Kong Watch with treason for critiquing the draconian Safeguarding National Security Ordinance.

### **Bill mandating US gov't help to resolve Tibet's legal status set for full Senate vote**

17 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

A bill mandating the US government to pressure China to negotiate with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected exile Tibetan leadership to reach a settlement on the legal status of Tibet has moved closer to being enacted into law with its clearance by a Senate committee on Apr 16, said Washington-based Tibet campaign group International Campaign for Tibet (ICT). The bill also recognizes Tibet as an occupied country and will require the US government to combat China's propaganda disinformation campaign on this issue.

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The main Agenda of Sikyong Penpa Tsering's visit to Washington, DC, is to meet with administration officials as well as members of Congress to push for the passage of this legislation which now heads to the full Senate for final debate and possible approval before President Joe Biden could sign it into law, said the ICT on its [savetibet.org](#) website Apr 16.

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The bill was earlier introduced by Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas, and Sens. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Todd Young, R-Ind in the two chambers of the US Congress. It was passed by the House of Representatives on Feb 15.

Known as the "Resolve Tibet Act" in short, the bill seeks to make it a US position that the dispute between Tibet and China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, by peaceful means through dialogue without preconditions.

It also states that the Chinese government's disinformation campaign, claiming Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times", is historically inaccurate. For this purpose, the US government is urged to use public diplomacy efforts to "counter disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including "disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama."

In this connection, the State Department's special coordinator for Tibetan issues is sought to be empowered to work to ensure that US government statements and documents counter Beijing's disinformation about Tibet.

The bill also encourages Washington to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.

It also encourages Beijing to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.

Significantly, the proposed legislation makes it clear that Tibet includes not just what China calls Xizang or Xizang Autonomous Region, but also the Tibetan regions that currently constitute or form parts of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

### **Central Tibetan Administration Appreciates Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Approval of Resolve Tibet Bill**

17 April 2024, [CTA](#)

The Central Tibetan Administration applauds the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's (SFRC) approval of the Resolve Tibet bill, S. 138 "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act". The bipartisan, bicameral Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act received approval during the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's session on 16 April 2024.

The bill also known as the Resolve Tibet Bill reaffirms the US policy of supporting direct dialogue between the People's Republic of China and representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama or with democratically elected Tibetan leaders, without any preconditions, to

resolve the Tibet-China conflict. The legislation also aims to counter disinformation propagated by the Chinese government regarding Tibet included fabricated narratives about Tibet's history, culture, people, and institutions including that of the Dalai Lama.

The bill approved by the SFRC is a revised iteration of the legislation initially presented by Senators Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) and Todd Young (R-Ind.), and also by Representatives Jim McGovern (D-Mass.) and Michael McCaul (R-Texas) in the House, where it secured passage. Following its approval by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the bill is now slated to proceed to the Senate floor.

During the bill introduction, Senator Merkley stated, "The People's Republic of China continues to ignore the basic rights of the Tibetan people, and the status quo is not tenable. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act sends a straightforward message to the Chinese government: stop spreading disinformation about Tibet and its history and enter sincere negotiations over Tibet's status. We must get this bipartisan bill over the finish line because the people of Tibet deserve a say in how they are governed."

Senator Young urged, "The Chinese Communist Party's aggression towards Tibet is self-serving, with negotiations and even the very definition of Tibet on the CCP's terms. We must refresh U.S. policy towards Tibet, and push for negotiations that advance freedoms for the Tibetan people and peaceful resolution to the CCP's conflict with the Dalai Lama. I am pleased by today's vote, and I urge the full Senate to pass this bipartisan legislation and demonstrate America's resolve that the CCP's status quo – both in Tibet and elsewhere – is not acceptable."

In his official X (formerly called Twitter) account, Sikyong Penpa Tsering posted, "Grateful to witness the Resolve Tibet Act pass the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This marks a significant first step towards countering China's false narrative on Tibet's history. I thank SFRC Chairman Senator Cardin and all the members for their unwavering support."

Dr. Namgyal Choedup, Representative of Office of Tibet, North America, said: "Tibetans hold the US Congress in high regard and are always grateful for the support of the American people. With today's vote, the United States is once again showing that it is the leader on the international stage when it comes to advancing the just cause of the Tibetans. We thank the members of the committee for moving the Resolve Tibet Act to the Senate floor, and we call on the Senate to pass this bill without delay."

Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration has embarked on his official endeavours in Washington DC since Monday, 15 April

2024 as part of his engagement in North America. He has been actively involved in meetings with legislators and government officials to champion the passage of the Resolve Tibet Bill.

### Senate committee advances bill pushing Tibet-China negotiations

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

A bill to strengthen US efforts to get China back to the negotiating table with Tibetan leaders and combat China's disinformation about Tibet can now move to the Senate floor after a key committee's approval today.

The bipartisan Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act was approved at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's business meeting this morning, April 16, 2024.

The approval comes as Penpa Tsering, the exile-based Tibetan sikyong (president), is in Washington, DC for meetings with administration officials and with members of Congress to push for passage of this legislation.

Namgyal Choedup, representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to North America, said: "Tibetans hold the US Congress in high regard and are always grateful for the support of the American people. With today's vote, the United States is once again showing that it is the leader on the international stage when it comes to advancing the just cause of the Tibetans. We thank the members of the committee for moving the Resolve Tibet Act to the Senate floor, and we call on the Senate to pass this bill without delay."

International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso said: "Today's vote shows that Congress is making it a priority to resolve China's brutal occupation of Tibet through dialogue. We look forward to seeing this bill passed by the Senate and signed into law by the president. China needs to get back to negotiations with Tibetan leaders, and this bill will raise the diplomatic pressure on China significantly."

About the bill

The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act was introduced by Reps. Jim McGovern, D-Mass., and Michael McCaul, R-Texas, and Sens. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., and Todd Young, R-Ind. It passed the House on Feb. 15.

Known as the Resolve Tibet Act, the bill states that it is US policy that the dispute between Tibet and China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the UN Charter, by peaceful means through dialogue without preconditions.

Between 2002-10, the Chinese government took part in 10 rounds of dialogue with Tibetan leaders. Since then, China has refused to negotiate in good faith.

The bill also states that the Chinese government's disinformation claiming that Tibet has been part of China since "ancient times" is historically inaccurate.

The Resolve Tibet Act says that the US should:

- Promote substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community. The US could also explore activities to improve prospects for dialogue leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet.
- Encourage China's government to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people regarding their distinct historical, cultural, religious and linguistic identity.
- Use public diplomacy efforts to "counter disinformation about Tibet" from the Chinese government and Communist Party, including "disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama."
- Empower the State Department's special coordinator for Tibetan issues to work to ensure that US government statements and documents counter disinformation about Tibet.

Although the Chinese government attempts to shape a narrative that Tibet is only the Tibet Autonomous Region—an administrative region that spans less than half the Tibetan homeland—this legislation makes clear that Tibet also includes Tibetan regions of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces.

Suspend the Rules and Pass the Bill, H. R. 533, With an Amendment

(The amendment strikes all after the enacting clause and inserts a complete new text)

118TH CONGRESS 2D SESSION

To amend the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 to modify certain provisions of that Act.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 26, 2023

Mr. MCGOVERN (for himself and Mr. MCCAUL) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

A BILL

To amend the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 to modify certain provisions of that Act.

H. R. 533

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

**SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

**This Act may be cited as the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act".** **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

Congress finds the following:

(1) It has been the long-standing policy of the United States to encourage meaningful and direct dialogue between representatives of the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama, his or her representatives, or democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community, without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences.

(2) Nine rounds of dialogue held between 2002 and 2010 between the People's Republic of China authorities and the 14th Dalai Lama's representatives failed to produce a settlement that resolved differences, and the two sides have held no formal dialogue since January 2010.

(3) An obstacle to further dialogue is that the Government of the People's Republic of China continues to impose conditions on substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama, including demand that he say that Tibet has been part of China since ancient times, which the Dalai Lama has refused to do because it is inaccurate.

(4) Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide that "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

(4) Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide that "All peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

(5) The United States Government has never taken the position that Tibet was a part of China since ancient times (6) China signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on October 5, 1998, and ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on March 27, 2001.

(7) Under international law, including United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2625, the right to self-determination is the right of a people to determine its own destiny and the exercise of this right can result in a variety of outcomes ranging from independence, federation, protection, some form of autonomy or full integration within a State.

(8) United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1723, adopted on December 20, 1961, called for the “cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to self-determination.”

(8) United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1723, adopted on December 20, 1961, called for the “cessation of practices which deprive the Tibetan people of their fundamental human rights and freedoms, including their right to self-determination.”

(9) Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in a May 26, 2022, speech entitled “The Administration’s Approach to the People’s Republic of China,” said that the rules-based international order’s “founding documents include the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which enshrined concepts like self-determination, sovereignty, the peaceful settlement of disputes. These are not Western constructs. They are reflections of the world’s shared aspirations.’

(10) The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note), as amended by the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, in directing the United States Government “to promote the human rights and distinct religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical identity of the Tibetan people” acknowledges that the Tibetan people possess a distinct religious, cultural, linguistic, and historical identity.

(11) Department of State reports on human rights and religious freedom have consistently documented systematic repression by the authorities of the People’s Republic of China against Tibetans as well as acts of defiance and resistance by Tibetan people against the People’s Republic of China policies.

(12) The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note), as amended by the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, specifies that the central objective of the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues is to promote substantive dialogue between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Dalai Lama, his or her representatives, or democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community.

### SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.

It is the policy of the United States—

(1) that the Tibetan people are a people with a distinct religious, cultural, linguistic and historical identity;

- (2) that the dispute between Tibet and the People’s Republic of China must be resolved in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Charter, by peaceful means, through dialogue without preconditions,

- (3) that the People’s Republic of China should cease its propagation of disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama;

- (4) to encourage the People’s Republic of China to uphold all its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; and
- (5) in accordance with the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020
- (A) to promote substantive dialogue without pre-conditions, between the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Dalai Lama, his or her representatives, or democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community, or explore activities to improve prospects for dialogue, that leads to a negotiated agreement on Tibet;
- (B) to coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts towards the goal of a negotiated agreement on Tibet; and
- (C) to encourage the Government of the People’s Republic of China to address the aspirations of the Tibetan people with regard to their distinct historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity.

### SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.

It is the sense of Congress that—

- (1) claims made by officials of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times are historically inaccurate;
- (2) the current policies of the People’s Republic of China are systematically suppressing the ability of the Tibetan people to preserve their religion, culture, language, history, way of life and environment;
- (3) the Government of the People’s Republic of China is failing to meet the expectations of the United States to engage in meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives or to reach a negotiated resolution that includes the aspirations of the Tibetan people; and

### SEC. 5. MODIFICATIONS TO THE TIBETAN POLICY ACT OF 2002.

(a) TIBET NEGOTIATIONS.—Section 613(b) of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note) is amended—

- (1) in paragraph (2), by striking “and” at the end;
- (2) in paragraph (3), by striking the period at the end and inserting “; and”; and

(3) by adding at the end the following: “(4) efforts to counter disinformation about Tibet from the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party, including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama.”.

(b) UNITED STATES SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES.—Section 621(d) of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note) is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraphs (6), (7), and (8) as paragraphs (7), (8), and (9), respectively; and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (5) the following: “work with relevant bureaus of the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development to ensure that United States Government statements and documents counter, as appropriate, disinformation about Tibet from the Government of the People’s Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party, including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama;”

(c) DEFINITION.—The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note) is amended by adding at the end the following:

**“SEC. 622. DEFINITION.**

“For purposes of this Act, the term ‘Tibet’ refers to the following areas:

“(1) The Tibet Autonomous Region.

“(2) The areas that the Government of the People’s Republic of China designated as Tibetan Autonomous, as of 2018, as follows:

“(A) Kanlho (Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Pari (Tianzhu) Tibetan Autonomous County located in Gansu Province.

“(B) Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Malho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsojang (Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsolho (Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Tsonub (Haixi) Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, and Yulshul (Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, located in Qinghai Province.

“(C) Garze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Ngawa (Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, and Muli (Mili) Tibetan Autonomous County, located in Sichuan Province.

“(D) Dechen (Diqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, located in Yunnan Province.”.

**SEC. 6. AVAILABILITY OF AMOUNTS TO COUNTER DISINFORMATION ABOUT TIBET.**

Amounts authorized to be appropriated or otherwise made available under section 346 of subtitle E of title III of division FF of Public Law 116–260 (“Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020”) are authorized to be made available to counter disinformation about Tibet from the Government of the People’s Republic of China and

the Chinese Communist Party, including disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions including that of the Dalai Lama.

**Sikkim CM alleges former state govt. coerced Karmapa’s exit from India**

15 April 2024, [Phayul](#)

Ahead of the 2024 Indian Lok Sabha election, the anticipated return of the revered Buddhist figure, the 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, to India has become a prominent theme in political campaigns in the state of Sikkim. Prem Singh Tamang, the incumbent Chief Minister of Sikkim, alleged on Wednesday that the previous ruling party of the state, the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF) led by Pawan Kumar Chamling coerced the 17th Karmapa to leave India by unjustly labelling him a Chinese agent.

Tamang promised the crowd that the government would support a pilgrimage for 4,000 Buddhist monks to the Dominican Republic to receive the blessings of the Karmapa. He criticised the former CM Pawan Kumar Chamling for supposedly pledging to send 4,000 lamas to the Dominican Republic to meet with Karmapa, calling it deceptive. In August 2020, CM Tamang reportedly wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, asking the Indian government to allow the 17th Karmapa to return to India, as reported by *The Week*. He informed PM Modi that Sikkimese and Buddhist devotees were urging him to let the Tibetan spiritual figure come back for religious commitments.

Tamang reminded PM Modi that Karmapa was granted asylum by PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2000. He mentioned that restrictions were later placed on his movement within the country, preventing his visit to Sikkim despite popular demands from devotees. He also acknowledged that it was the Modi government that lifted these restrictions in 2018, except entry into the Rumtek Monastery, and expressed gratitude on behalf of the people of Sikkim for removing such barriers. Furthermore, Tamang stated that the public demand for Karmapa’s visit has been growing and urged Modi to consider allowing the Tibetan spiritual leader entry into India as soon as possible.

The former CM Chamling during his chief-ministership reached out to the then External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, asking for permission for the 17th Karmapa to visit the north-eastern state. “I have written a letter to Sushma Swaraj seeking her assistance and cooperation in permitting the 17th Karmapa, His Holiness Ogyen Trinley Dorje, to visit any monastery in Sikkim, if not Rumtek Monastery, to bless our people,” Chamling stated in an interview. He emphasised that the Karmapa’s visit would fulfill the



longstanding demand of the people and the Sikkim government.

The Karmapa obtained a passport from the Commonwealth of Dominica in 2018 to make traveling easier after facing restrictions on movement in India. He serves as the head of the Karma Kagyu School, one of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibetans and Buddhists in India have been advocating for his return to India where the bulk of his followership is based.

Rumtek Monastery, also known as the Dharmachakra Centre in Sikkim, is considered the main seat of the Karma Kagyu lineage in exile and has become a focal point of a long-standing dispute within the sect. Despite being in exile, the spiritual leader of the Kagyu lineage has not been permitted to visit the monastery.

### **Bollywood star calls on Dalai Lama as she campaigns for parliament seat**

15 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Bollywood star Ms Kangana Ranaut has on Apr 15 called on His Holiness the Dalai Lama at his residence in Dharamshala along with former BJP Chief minister (Ex-CM) Jairam Ramesh Thakur of Himachal Pradesh. The much-publicized Indian actress is contesting as the BJP candidate for the Mandi district constituency seat in the ongoing general elections.

“It was an experience which I’ll cherish all my life. I think it is exceptional to be in the presence of such a being who has sheer divinity around him. So, it was very emotional for me and ex-CM-Ji. ... It is something I will cherish all my life,” she said, following her meeting.

Last year, on Apr 12, Kangana had re-tweeted a meme which featured the Dalai Lama and read, “The Dalai Lama receives a warm welcome at the White house”. The picture in the tweet showed Dalai Lama sticking his tongue out with Joe Biden Photoshopped in front of him.

Sharing the post, the actor wrote, “Hmmm dono ko same bimari hai, definitely dono ki dosti ho sakti hai (The two have the same illness, they can be friends for sure).”

Given the media controversy raised about a news video of the Dalai Lama shown sticking his tongue out to an Indian boy during a public meeting, and the out-of-context suggestions of misconduct sought to be attributed to the Tibetan spiritual leader at that time, Tibetans protested strongly against her, including outside her office in Mumbai.

It prompted Ms Ranaut to clarify on Instagram: “A group of Buddhist people doing dharna outside my office in Pali Hill, I didn’t mean to hurt anyone, it was a harmless joke about Biden being friends with Dalai

Lama.... please don’t misunderstand my intentions (folded hands emoji).”

She also added, “I do believe in Buddha’s teachings and his holiness 14th Dalai Lama has spent his whole life in public service, I hold nothing against anyone, don’t stand in the harsh heat, please go home”, (with a folded hands emoji again). Ms Ranaut is pitted Against Congress stalwart Vikramaditya Singh, son of the state’s late former Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh who had got elected from the Mandi parliamentary constituency in the 2009 general elections and in 2013 by-election. Vikramaditya is currently a state government minister. Virbhadra Singh’s widow Pratibha Singh currently represents Mandi in the Indian parliament, having won it in the 2021 election. Voting for the Mandi Lok Sabha (Lower House of Indian parliament) seat, which has 17 assembly segments, is being held together with the Lok Sabha polls on Jun 1. The fight between the two candidates is seen as a tough one. Kangana, who turned 37 on Mar 23, was born in a small town of Mandi district. Her great-grandfather, Sarju Singh Ranaut, was an MLA. Her mother, Asha Ranaut, retired as a schoolteacher from Mandi, and her father, Amardeep, is a businessman. The actor previously visited the Baglamukhi and Jwala Devi temples in Himachal to celebrate her nomination on Mar 24.

### **Representative Rigzin Genkhang Briefs Dutch Ambassador for Human Rights on the Critical Situation in Tibet**

16 April 2024, [CTA](#)

Representative Rigzin Genkhang met with H.E. Wim Geerts, Dutch Ambassador for human rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. During the meeting Representative Genkhang expressed her gratitude to Ambassador Geerts for his recent expression of concern on the situation in Derge and calling on the Chinese government for the immediate release of those arrested for exercising their fundamental rights.



*Representative Rigzin Genkhang with H.E. Wim Geerts, Dutch Ambassador for human rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.*

Representative Genkhang further briefed Ambassador Geerts on the critical situation in Tibet highlighting among other things, Chinese interference in the succession of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and the forced assimilation of Tibetan children in Chinese state-run boarding schools aimed at eradicating Tibetan identity and culture.

Ambassador Geerts reaffirmed his government's continued support and informed Representative Genkhang that Prime Minister Rutte raised the issue of Tibet with his Chinese counterpart during his visit to China in March this year.

Ambassador Geerts was previously the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands to China and is well acquainted with the situation in Tibet.

### **Eminent Buddhist teacher Arjia Rinpoche gives first-hand information about China's atrocities to Japanese lawmakers**

11 April 2024, [The Print](#)

Tokyo [Japan], April 11 (ANI): Internationally known Buddhist teacher Lobsang Tubten Jigme Gyatso, prominently known as the Arjia Rinpoche, revealed to Japanese lawmakers the ongoing human rights violations in Tibet inflicted by China.

During his visit to Japan, Rinpoche was invited to the Japanese National Parliament, popularly known as Diet in Tokyo, a press release by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) reported.

During his visit, Rinpoche met with the Japanese Parliamentarian Group, monitoring China's human rights violations.



*Prominent Buddhist teacher Arjia Rinpoche reveals first-hand information of China's atrocities to Japanese lawmakers (Photo credits: Central Tibetan Administration)*

Lobsang Tubten Jigme Gyatso is a Mongolian, who was recognised as the 8th Arjia Rinpoche at the age of two in 1952 by the 10th Panchen Lama. Rinpoche revealed how China invaded Tibet and destroyed monasteries, religious artefacts, and how monks, including him, were forced to disrobe and denied religious education. He further talked about how the 11th Panchen Lama recognised by the Dalai Lama was kidnapped and how a false Panchen Lama was installed through dubious means, the press release said.

Rinpoche said that he was given a high religious position, only to be controlled and used by the communist leadership.

When he was asked to tutor the false Panchen Lama and forced to do things against his religious faith, he decided to flee Tibet, he said.

Another Japanese lawmaker, Shimamura Hakubun, thanked the Rinpoche for the information provided.

Hakubun also mentioned that it greatly helped the parliamentarians to get firsthand information on Chinese religious atrocities in Tibet.

He assured Rinpoche that Japan would do its best to address Chinese repression in Tibet and southern Mongolia.

According to the press release, Arjia Rinpoche attended to questions from lawmakers on how Japan could further extend help, the relationship with Japanese monasteries, and Tibetan independence.

During his session at the Diet, Rinpoche requested the issuance of statements of support from the Japanese government and the public.

On the relationship with Japanese monasteries, Rinpoche said Japanese sangha members greatly respect the Dalai Lama and have maintained a good relationship with the Tibetan Buddhist community.

On the independence issue, Rinpoche explained the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach and requested the support of the Japanese parliament. (ANI)

*This report is auto-generated from ANI news service. ThePrint holds no responsibility for its content.*

## Europe For Tibet Campaign Launched in The European Parliament

10 April 2024, [CTA](#)



The campaign “Europe for Tibet” was launched in the European Parliament during a meeting with Members of European Parliament, ahead of the 06-09 June European elections.

The campaign website [eu4tibet.org](http://eu4tibet.org) will serve as a platform for all groups advocating for the rights and freedom of the Tibetan people based in the member states to obtain a pledge of support for Tibet from the candidates of the 2024 European elections and to question their political parties on their position on Tibet.

This campaign jointly organised by the Office of Tibet, Brussels, and the International Campaign for Tibet with the support from Offices of Tibet in London and Geneva and the International Tibet Network aims to mobilize support from current and future members of the European Parliament, Tibet Support Groups, Tibetan Communities in Europe, V-TAG members and all other groups advocating for Tibet to reestablish a dedicated group of Members of the European Parliament supportive of Tibet in order to ensure Tibet’s continued presence on the agenda of the European Union in the next legislative term.

Speakers at the event included Mikulas Peksa, Salima Yenbou, Ausra Maldeikiene, Members of the European Parliament, Rigzin Genkhang, Representative of H.H. the Dalai Lama in Brussels, Wangpo Tethong, Executive Director of the International Campaign for Tibet.

Parliamentary Assistants, Vincent Metten and Mélanie Blondel, ICT, Brussels, Thinley Wangdue, Office of Tibet, Brussels and V-TAG members also attended the event.

To close the event, Members of the European Parliament were offered a traditional Tibetan scarf.

## 27th Tibetan Shoton Festival Begins in Dharamshala, Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche Graces the Festival’s Inaugural

10 April 2024, [CTA](#)



*Kyabje Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche addressing the gathering during the opening ceremony of the 27th Tibetan Shoton Festival. Photo / Tenzin Jigme Taydeh / CTA*

The 27th annual Tibetan Shoton Festival (yoghurt festival) in exile kicked off today at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) in Dharamshala to celebrate Tibetan opera from 10 – 22 April 2024.

Kyabje Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche Jetsun Tenzin Chokyi Gyaltsen graced the opening ceremony of the festival as chief guest, along with officiating Sikyong Tharlam Dolma Changra, Kalon (Minister) of the Department of Education, and Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang from the Tibetan Parliament in Exile. Election and Public Service Commissioner Wangdue Tsering Pesur, Standing Committee Members and Dharamshala-based Parliamentarians of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, Secretaries and staff of the Central Tibetan Administration, Secretaries of the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dharamshala Tibetan Settlement Officer, Members of Local Tibetan Assembly and Tibetan Freedom Movement, and representatives of the Tibetan NGOs and institutions also attended the festival’s inaugural.

Following a day-long display of each opera story’s preview from the participating troupes, chief guest Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche delivered a keynote speech. “Despite Tibet’s continued difficulties and the geographical separation of Tibetans inside and outside of Tibet, we should be proud of our capacity to host the Shoton Festival of this magnitude in exile, drawing ever-larger crowds of participants,” said Rinpoche while commending the members of opera troupes for their devotion and dedication to preserving the rich opera tradition of Tibet. The chief guest went on to say that it was His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s leadership that empowered the Tibetan people to preserve and honour their rich cultural heritages and hence advised all the Tibetans to remember the benevolence of His Holiness time and again and adhere to His noble guidance. Rinpoche further emphasised the collective efforts of every Tibetan in maintaining Tibet’s unique traditions, including Tibetan opera.

After concluding the address, Kundeling Tatsak Rinpoche handed over a cheque of 1 Lakh rupees to each troupe group, a small contribution from the

Department of Religion and Culture, CTA, for their sustenance.

Over the course of the 13-day Shoton Festival, Tibetan troupes from various settlements will present different Tibetan opera performances.

### White paper addresses Himalayan water security challenges

08 April 2024, [International Campaign for Tibet](#)

A new white paper summarizing a panel at World Water Week 2023 in Stockholm is providing recommendations for China and other stakeholders to address water security in the region where Tibet is located.

“Addressing Water Security Challenges in the Himalayan Region” is available to read now.

The white paper is the result of the panel during World Water Week organized by the International Water Management Institute and supported by the US Department of State, the International Tibet Network, the Mountain Resiliency Project and the International Campaign for Tibet.

The panel featured two Tibetan experts based in exile: Tsechu Dolma, founder of the Mountain Resiliency Project, and Lobsang Yangtso, senior researcher at the International Tibet Network. The third panelist was Manohara Khadka, the Nepal country representative for the International Water Management Institute.

The thoughts and recommendations of all three panelists are featured in the white paper.

Water security panel

The panel took place Aug. 24, 2023 at the World Water Week Conference in Stockholm.

The discussion focused on environmental sustainability and climate change on the Earth’s “Third Pole,” as the Himalayan region is known.

That region is home to one-fifth of the world’s freshwater supply. Glacial runoff forms rivers in almost every country across South and Southeast Asia.

Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya, who serves as the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, spoke to the panel by video message.

Asok Kumar, director general of the National Mission for Clean Ganga, Ministry of Jal Shakti, government of India, also addressed the panel by video, while Rebecca Peters, a water policy advisor to the State Department, delivered remarks in person.

“Water is essential to all life,” said Franz Matzner, director of government relations for the International Campaign for Tibet. “World Water Week brings together people from across the globe with a shared mission to use water for peace. ICT was proud to be a part of the event.”

The views of the three main experts at the panel—Tsechu Dolma, Lobsang Yangtso and Manohara

Khadka—are featured in the white paper, which also includes a comment from Matzner.

The white paper touches on topics like adaptation measures in the face of climate change and receding glaciers; the implications of water challenges for women, poor and marginalized communities; and how global networks in water and environmental security can aid Himalayan nations.

The paper also includes Dolma’s, Yangtso’s and Khadka’s policy recommendations.

These recommendations call for:

- the People’s Republic of China and other central governments to halt policies that prioritize extraction
- building the capacity of local governments to design, implement and assess the impact of policies on equitable access to and control over water, land and energy
- the Chinese government to provide access to Tibet for independent media, scientists, NGOs, UN monitors and other international observers
- investing in sustainable renewable energy sources, such as solar or wind energy. Properly sited and constructed for co-management, such installations can generate clean energy while maintaining additional values, such as grazing and herding. The technology exists, so it is a matter of making choices and much more

### Sikyong Penpa Tsering Addresses Members of Tibetan Community in Toronto

08 April 2024, [CTA](#)

As part of his official engagements in Toronto, Sikyong Penpa Tsering of the Central Tibetan Administration addressed the members of the Tibetan community on 6 April 2024 at the auditorium of the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre.

While crediting His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama for establishing the unparalleled exiled Tibetan community with full-fledged democratic institution, Sikyong Penpa Tsering said, “Although more than six decades have passed since the start of our journey into exile, Tibetans are still struggling to sort out the long-standing Tibet-China conflict with full commitment.” However, given the uncompromising policies of Chinese President Xi Jinping, the Tibetan political leader added that immediate resolution of this conflict seems unattainable at the moment and, hence, implored Tibetans to remain dedicated and pool their efforts and energies in resolving the Tibet-China conflict without falling into petty internal infightings. Sikyong further illuminated the gathering about Central Tibetan Administration’s policy of Middle Way

Approach, a win-win solution that aims to seek a peaceful solution through dialogue.



*Sikyong Penpa Tsering during his meeting with Tibetan residents of Toronto at Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre*

In regard to the Tibet advocacy campaign, Sikyong informed that he paid special visits to countries with whom Tibet had no prior formal relationship to draw their attention to the plight of the Tibetan people and cautioned them against doing business with China. He pointed out that the current aggressive behaviour of China on the international stage has led to a negative attitude towards China in many countries and that this has led to a growing interest in the Tibetan freedom struggle.

Likewise, as the Resolve Tibet Act is currently making its way through the US House of Senators, Sikyong acknowledged that the goal of this visit is to garner support for the successful passage of this Tibet bill before concluding his talk.

On Sunday, Sikyong Penpa Tsering interacted with students and teachers of the Tibetan Weekend school and held a separate meeting with Tibetan youths to enlighten them about the geopolitical and strategic significance of the Tibetan plateau. Similarly, Sikyong also convened representatives of the Tibetan Buddhist Centres to discuss issues concerning Tibetan Buddhism, including the reincarnation of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama.

Until 11 April, Sikyong Penpa Tsering will undertake a series of official engagements in Toronto and Montreal before heading to the United States.

### **“Don’t flood your country with cheap Chinese products”: Tibetan leader in exile Sikyong Penpa**

05 April 2024, [Organiser](#)

Exiled Tibetan leader Sikyong Penpa Tsering advised against inundating nations with inexpensive Chinese goods, highlighting the threat posed to local industries. Tsering underscores China’s strategic trade tactics, urging caution in engaging with their exports to the Global South.

Fretting over “dumping” by China to Global South—that is, exporting goods at artificially low prices,

President of Central Tibetan Administration of Tibetan government-in-exile Sikyong Penpa Tsering, warned them to be careful while doing business with China.....

While speaking to ANI, Sikyong Penpa Tsering said, “China is now exporting more to the Global South, and my warning to those countries is don’t flood your country with cheap Chinese products because they are going to kill your industries. Nothing comes for free from China. They always come with the strategy.”.....China’s overinvestment and excess capacity could result in cheap products flooding global markets, affecting local industries and employment. Raising concern over cheap Chinese products inundating the Global South, Tsering urged the nations to give China less business. The only way to bring them down, to their knees is through the economy. Give them less business, and then they won’t have all that money to splurge on the Belt and Road initiatives (BRI) and create a dead economy worldwide,” said Tsering. BRI aims to connect Asia, Africa, and Europe. Its goal is to increase trade, improve regional integration, and stimulate economic growth. Sikyong Penpa Tsering also raised concern over China controlling regional water resources, shown in its reluctance to sign international agreements on cross-border water management. The country can seize water sources without any military force; because the rivers originate within its territory, they are seen as China’s natural assets. He said that China wants to control the water resources so they are building multiple dams in Tibet. This will have an impact on several countries.

Commenting on the building of multiple dams in Tibet by China, Tsering stated, “You know the 10 major rivers that flow out of Tibet go into 10 different countries, and from China to 5 countries in Southeast Asia. Burma Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal, Pakistan, and Bangladesh all have rivers as precious commodities.

“Some people say that the ‘Third World War’ could happen because of water, if that is the case, then I consider Tibet a hotspot. Because Tibet is now also being offered as the water tower of Asia... because of the snow mountain ranges, people started calling Tibet the roof of the world, and now Chinese environmental scientists call Tibet a third pole,” he added.

Climate change plays a key role in the water shortage crisis in China. For thousands of years, civilisations along the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers fed on the glacial meltwater from the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau – also known as ‘The Third Pole’. Once a stable source of river flow, the ice mass is now less capable of supplying glacial melt with fresh snow and ice, since global warming has raised the temperature of the glacial region by 3- 3.5C over the past half-century.

Furthermore, he expressed concerns about several villages and monasteries facing inundation. He said to media, "Several villages are going to be inundated, about six monasteries, 600 to 700 years old will be submerged in water and ultimately destroyed, so the Chinese government has no more concerns about addressing the grievances of the local people."

During an interview with media, Tsering emphasised there will be no normalisation of relationships due to the Chinese activities along the Ladakh border.

"So in that sense, we see the continuity of the programmes and right now with this government, having taken a stronger position on the diligence on the Ladakh border by the Chinese government, that till there is disengagement from all sectors there will be no normalisation of relationships and adding to all these are also developments in the maritime security of India, including Maldives," Tsering added. He also spoke on the India-Maldives diplomatic rift, Tsering said, "We are talking about the Maldives government asking the Indian army to move out by May 10 so all these geopolitical developments are not helping build better relations." The Maldives has recently found itself in the midst of diplomatic turmoil, raising questions about its relations with India through undiplomatic remarks, military positioning, and the scrapping of crucial agreements. Maldives has also signed new deals with China, further complicating the geopolitical landscape.

"So just as China is complaining that the US is trying to contain us, China has been trying to contain India for the last so many decades and they can't apply double standards. What works for them is fine and what doesn't work for them isn't fine for the Chinese," he said.

### **Sri Lankan monks present Buddha relics to HH the Dalai Lama**

04 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

A delegation of Buddhist monks from Sri Lanka has on Apr 4 presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama at Dharamshala, relics of the Buddha that has been kept at their monastery for the last one and a quarter century. It was stated to be a long-standing aim of a group of Sri Lankan Buddhists led by the Most Venerable Dr Waskaduwe Mahindawansa Maha Nayaka Thero, head of Amarapura Sambuddha Sasanodaya Maha Nikaya, to realise this historic occasion.

The presentation was coordinated by Dr Damenda Porage, Founder-President of the Sri Lanka-Tibetan Buddhist Brotherhood in Sri Lanka.

His Holiness greeted the relics at the gate of his residence from a ceremonial procession led by the Most Venerable Thero and his party from Sri Lanka.

His Holiness respectfully touched the portable reliquary with his bowed head as the Sri Lankan party chanted auspicious verses.

"We pray for your good health and long life and offer these relics to you," the Most Venerable Thero was quoted as having told His Holiness. "We, members of the Sri Lankan Mahasangha appreciate your service to the world," the Most Venerable Thero has told His Holiness. "Teaching the world loving-kindness is one of the Buddha's accomplishments. You too are doing what the Buddha did. We have metta for everyone. Cultivating warm-heartedness is what the Dharma is about." (Metta is a Buddhist concept meaning benevolence, loving-kindness, friendliness, amity, good will, and active interest in others.)

Sitting with the Most Venerable Thero, joined by Prof Samdhong Rinpoché, Ling Rinpoché, Kirti Rinpoché, and Sikyong Penpa Tsering, His Holiness has said, among other things: "I respect all religious traditions, but it's Buddhism in particular that employs reason. This is why we are able to hold our own in discussions with scientists. I've met scientists who were initially sceptical about religion in general who eventually became Buddhists.

"Now, on a practical level, the world needs peace and that's the core of the Buddha's message. However, I'm prepared not to mention Buddhism as such but to emphasize secular ethics and universal values crucial among which is compassion. The important thing is to have a warm heart. Consequently, I'm committed to encouraging people to cultivate loving-kindness. What I want to convey is that I'm fully committed to promoting the Buddha's message from a secular point of view. What do you think?"

"It's a good way to approach the future," the Most Venerable Thero has responded.

After Buddha Shakyamuni's mortal remains were cremated following his passing away, what remained of his relics, in the form of fragments of bones and teeth, were divided among eight kingdoms. Stupas were then erected over them in Allakappa, Kapilavastu, Kushinagar, Pava, Rajagriha, Ramagrama, Vaishali, and Vethapida. During excavations at Piprahwa, which is identified with Kapilavastu, relics of the Buddha were discovered that had been enshrined by the Buddha's Shakyani relatives in Kapilavastu. In 1898, a British official, William Peppé, made a gift of these relics to the erudite Sri Lankan monk Most Venerable Waskaduwe Sri Subhuthi Mahanayake Thera, who brought them to Sri Lanka. The Most Venerable Dr Waskaduwe Mahindawansa Maha Nayaka Thero and his party arrived this morning at Kangra airport at Gaggal and drove up from there to His Holiness's residence to make its presentation to him.

## **Dalai Lama determined to live 100+ years to continue to serve Buddhadharmā**

04 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

At a time when the Buddhadharmā is seeing a bit of a decline, I am determined to serve it for another 15-20 years, said Holiness the Dalai Lama Apr 3 at a ceremony to offer long-life prayers to him made by the Toepa and Purang Tibetan communities.

His Holiness said the heartfelt sincerity of devotion of those making the offering has been a source of encouragement to him. Besides, he said, doctors most recently told him that he was in sound health.

The ceremony was led by Ling Rinpoché. He was joined in the front row by the two reincarnations of Trulshik Rinpoché and to his right, the Abbot of Sera-mé, the Lobsön of his Namgyal Monastery and Bodong Rinpoché. To his left sat the Abbot of Drepung Loseling and the Abbot of Tawang Monastery. In his address at the end of the ceremony, His Holiness said: "This is a time when the Buddhadharmā is in (a bit of a) decline and yet there have been many causes and conditions for me to be able to serve the teaching of the Buddha. Today, in places where the Dharma had not previously spread, people are taking interest in what the Buddha had to say about the workings of the mind and emotions, scientists particularly among them.

"Whether they are religious or not, there are growing numbers of people who appreciate that we can bring peace to the world by first achieving peace within. In this context this is my prayer:

"Wherever the Buddha's teaching has not spread and wherever it has spread but has declined may I, moved by great compassion, clearly elucidate this treasury of excellent benefit and happiness for all."

He also said: "At the same time, I would like to encourage people to have a keener sense of ethics, to serve humanity and, through understanding the functioning of their minds and emotions, to cultivate peace of mind. The inner and outer conditions exist for me to do this and the Dharma Protectors, who take responsibility for defending and preserving the Dharma, are helping me in what I'm trying to do."

## **His Holiness the Dalai Lama Expresses Solidarity with Victims of Taiwan Earthquake**

03 April 2024, [CTA](#)

Thekchen Chöling, Dharamsala, HP, India – His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written today to Tsai Ing-wen, President of Taiwan, the Republic of China, to express his sadness to learn of the loss of life and extensive devastation of property and infrastructure

that has taken place during a powerful earthquake off the east coast of Taiwan this morning.

"I pray for those who have lost their lives," he wrote, "as well as for the many who have been injured as a result of this natural disaster. I offer my condolences to Your Excellency and to the families of all who have been affected by this tragedy.

"I commend your Government and its concerned agencies for their swift response as they seek to rescue the injured and provide relief to those who need help.

## **China celebrates annexation of Tibet with events in border villages**

02 April 2024, [Phayul](#)

China has organized celebratory events in newly built border villages close to the borders with India and Bhutan to commemorate the anniversary of its annexation of Tibet last week on March 28.

Chinese state-run Xinhua news agency in its report stated that March 28th marks the 65th anniversary of what China terms the "democratic reform" in its southwestern so-called Xizang Autonomous Region, globally known as Tibet.

The celebrations were highlighted in the state-run Global Times, emphasizing their presence in the newly established border villages adjacent to India and Bhutan. China has been actively constructing well-equipped settlements along these borders, a move that has sparked concerns in both India and Bhutan.

A recent report in February revealed that three villages, featuring modern infrastructure for residents and soldiers, were erected along the disputed boundary with Bhutan. While China portrays these developments as part of its poverty alleviation efforts, they are also viewed by critics as strategic moves to broaden its foothold in the Himalayan region.

According to the Global Times, China has constructed approximately 624 such villages in border regions. The report underscored the celebrations held across these areas, depicting them as symbols of development and progress. In specific regions like the so-called Yadong County and Medog County, located along the southern borderlands with India and Bhutan, multiple events were organized to mark the anniversary.

China's relentless efforts to develop these border areas, coupled with its strategic undertones, continue to be closely monitored by India and neighbouring countries, especially amid ongoing geopolitical tensions in the region.

Two days after the celebration on Saturday, China announced the renaming of 30 additional places within a disputed border region with India, in a move seen as a bid to reinforce its territorial claims in the area. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs released the

updated list of names on Saturday, covering various locations in Arunachal Pradesh, a border state of India.

### **US government allocates \$23 million to support Tibetan programs**

02 April 2024, [Phayul](#)

The US has earmarked \$23 million to support Tibetan programs, according to the Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet (ICT). This allocation forms part of the extensive \$1.2 trillion government funding bill recently passed by the US Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden on March 23, aimed at financing various federal initiatives. The funds allocated to Tibetan programs include language preservation, environmental conservation, and efforts to strengthen Tibetan democracy in exile.

Among the allocations for Tibetan programs, \$10 million is designated for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) with proven experience in collaborating with Tibetan communities. This funding aims to support activities focused on preserving cultural traditions, fostering sustainable development, enhancing education, and promoting environmental conservation in Tibet.

Additionally, \$8 million is allocated to promote and safeguard Tibetan culture and language within Tibetan refugee and diaspora communities. This funding will also contribute to the development and resilience of Tibetan communities and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in India and Nepal. Moreover, it will facilitate the education and empowerment of the next generation of Tibetan leaders from these communities.

Furthermore, \$5 million is set aside to enhance the capacity of the CTA, which governs democratically for Tibetans in exile. A portion of this support, up to \$1.5 million, can be utilised for initiatives aimed at economic growth and capacity-building, including assistance for displaced Tibetan refugee families residing in India and Nepal.

The legislation also included a provision stipulating that no federal funds should be allocated for the production of maps or any other materials that depict Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China. This restriction remains in effect until the Chinese government engages in negotiations to reach a mutually agreed resolution regarding the status of Tibet.

Franz Matzner, director of government relations at the International Campaign for Tibet, hailed the new funding bill, stating, "The United States has once again demonstrated its commitment to the Tibetan people in concrete terms that provide crucial resources for their pursuit of freedom and cultural preservation in

the face of the Xi Jinping regime's escalating oppression.

"For those fighting for survival in Tibet, every dollar counts—and we are grateful for each one. For those outside Tibet, Congress' investment in maintaining the Tibetan people's distinct language, religion and way of life provides essential aid and a firm message of hope and solidarity."



## CHINA POLITICS

### China Vows Reforms at Long Delayed Party Conclave Amid Challenging Economy

30 April 2024, [US News](#)

A paramilitary police officer stands guard, on the day of the opening session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), in front of the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing, China March 4, 2024. REUTERS/Tingshu Wang/File Photo

BEIJING (Reuters) -The Chinese Communist Party's central committee will gather in July for a key meeting known as a plenum, the third since the body of elite decision makers was elected in 2022, focusing on reforms amid "challenges" at home and complexities broad.

Plenums are important events on China's political calendar that require the attendance of all of the party's central committee, comprising 205 members and 171 alternate members with President Xi Jinping at the helm.

The central committee typically holds seven plenums between party congresses, which are held once every five years. The current central committee members were elected at the last party congress in October 2022.

Further deepening reforms and promoting the modernisation of China will comprise the main agenda of the third plenum, state-run Xinhua news agency reported on Tuesday, citing the party's elite political bureau, or politburo, during a regular meeting.

Third plenums have been typically held in the autumn since the 1990s. The party was widely expected to hold one in either October or November 2023, but it did not.

"The meeting had been expected to happen late last year but was postponed without explanation," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, head of China economics at Capital Economics.

"We should get a better sense of the leadership's medium-term reform priorities during the third plenum."

The plenum will open amid a subdued economy, with the massively indebted property sector, once accounting for a quarter of gross domestic product, a major drag on household sentiment.

The economy still faces many challenges, with "effective demand" still lacking, the pressure on enterprises sizable, and risks and hazards in key areas numerous, Xinhua reported, citing the politburo meeting.

"Domestic circulation is also not smooth, and the complexity, severity and uncertainty of the external environment has obviously increased," Xinhua reported, adding China's economic foundation remained stable.

'CHINA COLLAPSE THEORY'

China has not collapsed as predicted by the "China collapse theory," nor will it peak as forecast by the "China peak theory," Xi said in March.

"I have repeatedly emphasised that reform and opening up are crucial tools for contemporary China to catch up with the times. China's reform will not pause, and its opening-up will not cease," he said.

"We are planning and implementing a series of significant measures to comprehensively deepen reform."

Third plenums have typically focused on reforms, after the end of the Cultural Revolution in the late 1970s. Some closed-door meetings have left a long-lasting and historical impact on the economy.

The third plenum in December 1978 under Deng Xiaoping initiated China's economic reforms, igniting the transformation of the world's most populous nation from a centrally planned backwater to a global economic powerhouse.

In November 2013 the central committee at a third plenum vowed to let markets play a "decisive" role in allocating resources in the economy.

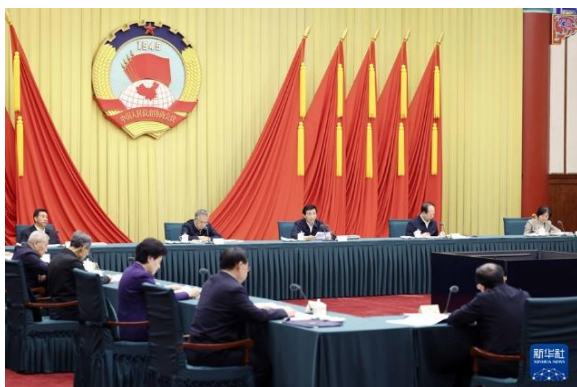
While a third plenum in February 2018, held atypically early that year, urged the party to "unite closely" around the central committee with Xi at the "core", and proposed the removal of a constitutional clause limiting presidential service to two terms.

Days later, China's largely rubber-stamp parliament voted to remove presidential term limits, allowing Xi to stay in office indefinitely.

(Reporting by Ryan Woo; Editing by Kim Coghill and Michael Perry and Miral Fahmy)

**China's national political advisory body holds leadership meeting**

29 April 2024, [CGTN](#)



*The 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference holds its 18th Chairperson's Council meeting in Beijing, China, April 29, 2024. /Xinhua*

The 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the national

political advisory body, held its 18th Chairperson's Council meeting in Beijing on Monday.

Wang Huning, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, presided over the meeting and delivered a speech.

Wang stressed the importance of acknowledging the western region's significant role in China's overall reform, development and stability. He urged efforts to conduct in-depth research and active consultation to facilitate the advancement of the western region's large-scale development in the new era.

He also called on political advisors to solidly carry out CPC discipline education and ensure strict Party self-governance within the national political advisory body. It was decided at the meeting that the Standing Committee of the 14th CPPCC National Committee will convene its seventh session from June 4 to 6.

During the meeting, a document on organizing study and research activities for members of the Chairperson's Council was deliberated and approved.

**China to try former Tibet propaganda chief for corruption**

25 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

China has charged with corruption an official who was for many years responsible for promoting its official line on Tibet and human rights, including with a stint as the propaganda chief of Tibet Autonomous Region, before rising to be the top legislator of Shanghai, official Chinese and other media reports cited prosecutors as saying Apr 24.

The prosecutors have accused Dong Yunhu, 61, of using his positions, such as head of the seventh bureau of the State Council Information Office, head of the publicity department of the Communist Party of China Xizang [Tibet] autonomous region Committee, chairman of the Shanghai Municipal Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, to seek benefits for others, reported China's official chinadaily.com.cn Apr 24.

The report said he also used his power and status to seek undue benefits for others through other civil servants; that in return, he accepted a large amount of property and money. Prosecutors have said he should be held criminally responsible for the crime of taking bribes.

Dong's alleged crimes date back to 1999, when he was in charge of planning and publicising Beijing's official message on human rights and Tibetan affairs as the bureau chief at China's State Council Information office, reported the scmp.com Apr 24, citing prosecutors.

The corruption was alleged to have continued in other leadership roles.

Dong was stated to have trained as a philosopher and started his career at the Communist Party school, where he managed its School of Marxism and Human Rights Research Centre in the 1990s.

The report said he has published several books on human rights, including a 2011 study of the history and functions of human rights centres in various countries, and co-authored a compilation of facts and statistics about Tibet in 2008.

Dong's leadership role was reported to have begun at China's State Council information office in 1999, where he served as the office director for the China Society for Human Rights Studies, a state-led research body.

In 2011, he was posted in Tibet autonomous region to manage communication and propaganda work there. He went on to take up the same role in Shanghai in 2015, later becoming head of its legislative body.

He was indicted in Hefei, a city in Anhui province, an announcement published on the website of the Supreme People's Procuratorate was cited as saying.

He was first placed under investigation for suspected corruption in July last year, making him the first ministerial level official to be purged after a major Communist Party reshuffle at the 20th party congress in Oct 2022, the report said.

Dong was expelled from the Communist Party of China, and removed from his public posts in Dec 2023.

Later, he was arrested, and his case was handed over to procuratorial organs for review.

He is a native of Xianju, Zhejiang province. He spent much of his career working in publicity departments before he was transferred to the Shanghai Municipal People's Congress earlier this year, said the chinadaily.com.cn report.

### **Publicize the wealth and corruption of the CCP leadership**

21 April 2024, [Sunday Guardian](#)

Global investigation into the wealth and corruption of the CCP leadership will show that the CCP's leaders are billionaires with untold wealth in New York, Switzerland, Dubai, London, Paris, and countless other locations.

A curious but often unreported fact about the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is that they are rich. The leadership is Communist, but also extremely wealthy. No Communist should be wealthy, it is like being a married bachelor, and the CCP are expert at hiding their wealth. Precisely how did the CCP leadership gain this wealth on their nominal salaries is an important issue for the global community to explore and, especially, for the Chinese people to know.

In an important effort in this regard, United States Senator Marco Rubio has inserted language into U.S. law which tasks the intelligence community of the United States to produce an unclassified—and thus publicly available report—on the wealth and corrupt activities of the leadership of the CCP. This includes the General Secretary of the CCP, Xi Jinping, and senior leadership officials of the Central Committee, the Politburo, the Politburo Standing Committee, and regional Party Secretaries. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) will also research this and produce a study to which all people around the globe will have access. The answers to these investigations are certain to be startling and capture the corrupt nature of the CCP. It underscores that the CCP rules China, but it is not the legitimate government of China. The CCP is illegitimate for three reasons. First, because they were formed and nurtured by the Communist International, and their seizure of power in 1949 was made possible by Stalin with his full backing and support in the wake of the defeat of Japan.

Second, as with the other poison fruits of the Bolshevik Revolution, because they seek to sustain the tyranny of the failed ideology of Marxism-Leninism on the Chinese people. The dependence upon this imported Western ideology means that at root the CCP's ideology of Marxism-Leninism, and its Chinese idioms, Maoism and later "Xi Jinping Thought," are illegitimate for China.

This ideology should be thought of for what it is: the last surviving form of Western colonialism, and despite the CCP's efforts, they cannot hide the fact that they are the product of this. The "Century of Humiliation," that defined Western imperialism in China from the First Opium War (1839-1842) to the CCP's victory (1949) in fact has not ended. More accurately given the CCP's colonial origins, China will soon realize its second century of humiliation. This causes a legitimization crisis in China that provides justification for the Chinese people to labour to overthrow the CCP. Its fall would permit China to evolve into a polity which is in accord with the historical political culture of China. As a product of Western intellectual thought, Marx, Engels, and Lenin, the CCP lacks even the legitimacy of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911/1912) who were foreign, Manchu rather than Han, but who ruled successfully in accord with China's dynastic ideology. Third, the CCP is vulnerable because of its abhorrent and contemptible leadership and the accelerated misrule of Communist dictator Xi Jinping. It possesses odious rulers who have forced China to endure decades of misrule. Seventy years of tyranny and wars against the Chinese people have led to scores of millions killed by the Chinese regime and the recognition by the Chinese people that the regime rules for itself, not for the people.

To call attention to the tyrannical and corrupt nature of CCP leaders, states can employ their resources to reveal the details of the corruption to the Chinese people and the world. This may be accomplished by employing their intelligence communities on this topic. Journalists may also find the topic worthy of investigation. Media, perhaps most importantly social media, may highlight the CCP's wealth and corruption to publicize and inform global populations.

Moreover, the community of nations may come together to identify the sources and location of the wealth of the CCP. What Sen. Rubio has started may be broadened. There could be a global initiative to document the wealth of the CCP leadership. Global investigation into the wealth and corruption of the CCP leadership will reveal the outlines of that base regime. No doubt, it will find that the CCP's leaders are billionaires with untold wealth in New York, Switzerland, Dubai, London, Paris, and countless other locations. While that has been long suspected, the revelation of the facts will be important for the Chinese people and the world to know.

The impact of this research would be magnified if other states, such as Australia, India, Japan, and EU members did as well. In Europe, Italy, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the United Kingdom, among others, have taken important steps to highlight the risks of the PRC's economic warfare against the EU, and might provide the European anchor of such a global effort.

Efforts to de-legitimize and undermine the CCP are important for three reasons. First, strategically, the most effective strategy to defeat the CCP's ambition and to target the CCP's demise. The CCP's legitimization crisis is at hand. They failed, as all Communist governments do. The Chinese people know it, the Party does, and likely Xi himself sees the truth.

Second, by accurately identifying its weaknesses, such as the obscene and ill-gotten wealth of its leadership, policies may be developed that assist its fall and permit states like India, Japan, and the United States to prepare for its demise. The ideological crisis of legitimacy, the increasing paranoid rule of Xi and ever-tightening circles of fear among the Party leadership provide important paths to the fall of the CCP. Accordingly, the study of the wealth and corruption of the CCP leadership contributes to its legitimization crisis and hastens the end of the regime.

Third, exposing its corruption is essential for the global community to recognize its illegitimacy and that the CCP beyond the bounds of acceptable behaviour in international society. Thus, openly planning for a post-Communist China is an appropriate global response. The world has done this before. For instance, sanctioning the apartheid regime of South Africa while supporting Nelson Mandela in his struggle against the

regime was ultimately successful. India, of course, led in this noble effort.

These actions that the global community, the Chinese Diaspora, and people of goodwill around the world may undertake will place the Party under pressure.

Knowing how many billions Xi, his family, and Party comrades have in overseas banks, properties, and other assets is significant to reveal the true corrupt nature of the CCP leadership, with specific amounts and locations documented. That will allow the victims of the CCP to move to seize those assets. Equally, it will allow the Chinese people and the world to see proof of the CCP's gross misrule and abuse of the country and the Chinese people. Bold actions may spark the events that lead to their overthrow.

### China sees foreign threats 'everywhere' as powerful spy agency takes center stage

21 April 2024, Nectar Gan, [CNN](#)

In a slick video marking the National Security Education Day, China's top spy agency has a stern message for Chinese people: foreign spies are everywhere.

As ominous music plays, a broad-faced, beady-eyed man disguises himself as a street fashion photographer, a lab technician, a businessman and a food delivery driver – he even sets up an online honey trap – to glean sensitive state secrets in various places and industries.

"In the sea of people, you may have never noticed him. His identity is changeable and his whereabouts are hard to find," a narrator says. "They are everywhere, cunning... and sneaky, and they may be right here in our lives."

Eventually, Chinese police catch the spy in a dramatic ambush after state security authorities receive multiple tip-offs from the public.

"They can disguise as anyone. But among the crowds you and I together are protecting national security," the narrator concludes. "We 1.4 billion people are 1.4 billion lines of defense."

The three-minute video is the latest propaganda push by China's powerful civilian spy agency, the Ministry of State Security (MSS), to mentally arm the Chinese public against what it sees as the growing threat of foreign espionage.

Under Xi Jinping, China's most authoritarian leader in decades, the country's notoriously secretive spy agency has drastically raised its public profile and broadened its remit.

From a shadowy organization without any discernable public face, the MSS has been transformed into a highly visible presence in public life.

In Chinese cities, posters and slogans promoting national security are now a common sight on

sidewalks, subway trains, campuses and billboards. On social media, the ministry commands a massive following with near-daily commentaries, short videos or even comic strips sounding the alarm about supposedly ubiquitous threats to the country.

### **Whistleblower alleges UN's 'dangerous favours' to China, Covid cover-up**

17 April 2024, [India Today](#)

The whistleblower's allegation includes charges of two UN General Assembly presidents being bribed by China, harassment of NGO delegates by China, and editing of UN report on Covid-19.

A former employee of the United Nations' Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Emma Reilly, has levelled serious allegations against the organisation. Reilly claimed that the OHCHR has been granting "dangerous favours" to the Chinese government, which she believes are part of China's broader strategy to use the UN for its national interests.

The written evidence was published by the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee. The evidence was submitted to it as part of its inquiry into international relations in the multilateral system. The Committee's inquiry focuses on how countries engage with multilateral organizations, whether through influencing them, working around them, or obstructing them.

Reilly's allegation includes charges of two UN General Assembly presidents being bribed by China, harassment of NGO delegates by China, and editing of a UN report on Covid-19. Reilly alleged that during the two-year negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals, China paid bribes to two successive Presidents of the UN General Assembly.

These presidents "ultimately oversaw the process and had significant influence over the final texts put to the Assembly", the evidence mentions.

In one of the posts on X, Reilly also tagged Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, and said he "fought hard" to keep quiet. "He knew he was breaking his own rules when he fired me - his Ethics tsar told him so," she wrote.

Additionally, Reilly claims that China imposed a secret condition on UN agencies, stipulating that funds provided by China cannot be spent in countries that have diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

Advance information on human rights activists

According to Reilly, the Chief of the Human Rights Council Branch in OHCHR, a French national, was secretly sharing advance information with China about human rights activists planning to attend the Human Rights Council.

"UN officials at all levels deliberately lied to member states, including the UK delegation, who enquired about the UN policy of handing names — including of UK citizens and residents — to the PRC (People's Republic of China) without their knowledge or consent".

Repercussions for NGO delegates

Reilly's evidence included chilling accounts of the consequences allegedly faced by NGO delegates whose names were shared with China in advance by the UN Secretariat. These delegates reported harassment, arbitrary arrests, house arrests, disappearances, torture, and in some cases, death of family members in detention.

One delegate, who attended only a side event, later returned to China and died in detention, Reilly claimed.

Additionally, China reportedly issued an Interpol red notice against an NGO delegate.

On Covid-19 reports being edited

Reilly alleged that reports from both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the origins of Covid-19 were edited to downplay the possibility of a laboratory leak.

Reilly's evidence was submitted before the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, which held its first evidence session in the inquiry on April 16.

### **China's spy agency encourages people to see spies everywhere**

16 April 2024, [RFA](#)

China's top spy agency is cranking up its propaganda campaign warning of foreign "spies" to mark National Security Education Day, in a bid to get more people to inform on each other and steer clear of anything linked to the West, analysts said this week.

Introduced by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2015, National Security Education Day is observed every April 15 to raise public awareness about safeguarding China's national security, a core interest of the government.

The feared Ministry of State Security released a video detailing its "top 10" list of major espionage cases and a list of cases based on tip-offs from members of the public, including the "hostile foreign forces" that Beijing claims are behind the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, and calling for greater public awareness of foreign "espionage" activities.

Part of the video features a Chinese-American shown to confess to allegedly being recruited as a spy by U.S. intelligence, who appealed to his sense of patriotism and "fooled" him into betrayal.

The man, surnamed Liang, goes on to say he regretted it greatly and warns readers: "I want to tell all Chinese people: Their (American) sweet words are fake."

The man is in his 70s and is said in the video to have been sentenced to life in prison in China in 2023.

Elastic definitions

The Chinese authorities have typically employed a highly elastic definition of what constitutes a state secret, and national security charges are frequently leveled at journalists, rights lawyers and activists, often based on material they post online.

"Comprehensive measures are needed in terms of raising awareness of safeguarding national security," the ministry, which included a top 10 list of public tip-offs, as well as details of "awards" handed out to people who made "significant contributions."

The video warned that university teachers and students were targets for foreign infiltration, mirroring international allegations about China's activities on overseas campuses.

Beijing also promoted National Security Education Day education in far-western Tibet and Uyghur-populated Xinjiang, where authorities impose particularly heavy-handed control to suppress what Beijing says are growing separatist — and in the case of Xinjiang, terrorist — threats.

Chinese nationals abroad were also warned to be vigilant.

"Through various means such as emotional solicitation, seduction and corruption, financial purchase and offering help, overseas spies have tried every means to recruit and instigate Chinese officials, researchers and Chinese personnel working overseas, posing a serious threat to China's national security," the film warned.

Claims of foreign espionage

Amendments to the Counter-Espionage Law in April 2023 further broadened the scope of material that can be used to back up allegations of spying, including the kind of data that could be gathered for market analysis.

They also give authorities new powers to access corporate facilities and electronic equipment, which have already been used to target foreign consultancies.

Feng Chongyi, a professor at the University of Technology in Sydney, said claims of foreign espionage are there to help shore up Communist Party leader Xi Jinping's grip on power.

"They want to keep eyes on everyone, everywhere, and watch everyone," Feng said. "They feel they don't have enough people to do this, despite already having around four million police officers, which is quite a lot."

"So, they need to mobilize the masses and give them the right to enforce the law and do the authorities'

dirty work for them," he said. "That means people informing on each other, setting people against each other, and everyone watching everyone else."

In January, police arrested the head of a foreign consultancy firm as an alleged British spy, with one newspaper warning that there are "007s" everywhere in real life — a reference to the fictional British secret agent James Bond whose code name is 007.

The ministry list features Canadian nationals Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig, along with Belizean national Henley Lee, who was accused of funding the 2014 Occupy Central pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong, also known as the Umbrella Movement.

Lee was paraded on state TV in a heavily stage-managed confession in 2021 and accused of "funding hostile elements in the U.S., colluding with foreign anti-China forces to intervene in Hong Kong affairs, and funding the implementation of criminal activities that endangered our national security," in connection with the 2014 Hong Kong protests.

Spavor and Kovrig were among eight Canadian nationals detained in China within weeks of the arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver in December 2018. All three were released almost simultaneously after Meng made a deal with U.S. investigators over allegations that she broke U.S. sanctions, ending her house arrest.

The party's grip on power

Veteran journalist and political commentator Hu Ping said the "national security" campaign is a political tool that will help ensure the stability of the regime.

"What they are doing is trying to get everyone to inform on each other," Hu said. "It claims to be about national security, but actually it puts the interests of the Communist Party's grip on power above everything else."

Hu warned that such an approach will cause "widespread panic" and put a huge strain on interpersonal relationships.

"That atmosphere is entirely conducive to the authorities' control over the people ... and could lead to a large number of false claims and miscarriages of justice," he said.

Veteran journalist Tang Jingyuan said the ministry's lists were carefully curated to give the impression that anything that has to do with the West is suspicious.

"It replicates the tactics of class struggle from the Mao era," Tang said in a reference to Mao Zedong, influential Chinese leader and founder of the People's Republic of China, whose revolutionary ideology shaped the country's history from 1949 to 1976.

"The aim is to create an atmosphere that is anti-Western, or at least wary of the West ... and that keeps its distance from foreign countries," she said.

Hong Kong

Authorities in Hong Kong, which recently added a second national security law to its statute book, staged a series of lavish ceremonies to mark the day, which critics say has become a focal point for "brainwashing" of Hong Kongers by the ruling Chinese Communist Party amid an ongoing crackdown on public dissent. Beijing's envoy to Hong Kong, Central Liaison Office director Zheng Yanxiong warned that the government would fight back, using "tit-for-tat cognitive warfare" against critics of the Safeguarding National Security Law, which extended an ongoing crackdown on dissent and political opposition in the city begun in the wake of the 2019 protest movement.

"Some ill-intentioned foreign forces have been bad-mouthing China and Hong Kong ... and even some renowned Western media have jumped on the bandwagon, slandering and smearing," Zheng said, in a reference to criticism of the new law, known as Article 23, in the media.

Current affairs commentator Sang Pu said Beijing is continuing to claim that Hong Kong is a "base" from which "foreign forces" will try to infiltrate the rest of China, despite the fact that the majority of opposition politicians and activists are either behind bars or overseas now.

"It's all a kind of packaging, and is definitely not factual," Sang said of the claim. "They claim that large amounts of money have poured into Hong Kong since June 2019, but it's all fake news."

"They want to shift everyone's focus from the tyranny, incompetence and corruption of the Chinese Communist Party and the Hong Kong government to 'infiltration by foreign forces,'" he said.

#### Tibet

In monasteries, schools, and villages in Lhasa, capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region, authorities emphasized the need to protect state secrets, promptly report any activities threatening national security, and defend the country and resist aggression. Authorities also stressed the ban on communication with the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, and the exiled Tibetan community, considered by China as "separatist groups," and on restricting the sharing of domestic information with the outside world, a source inside Tibet told Radio Free Asia.

Experts on the region said the measures were initiated without any legal basis and were intended as a suppression tool to be used against Tibetans and other ethnic minorities.

"The Chinese government asserts that national security education strengthens the totalitarian power of the Chinese Communist Party," said Dawa Tsering, director of the Tibet Policy Research Institute in Dharmasala, India. "In the interests of the party, Tibetans are often accused of national security violations and breaking the law."

China's National Security Education Day initiatives include official interpretations and terminologies, such as "state power, ruling power of the state, unitary sovereignty and complete territorial integrity," but in Tibet, they primarily refer to banning contact with the Dalai Lama, he said.

Every year, there are reports of Tibetans who have been arrested, arbitrarily detained, disappeared or sentenced for alleged involvement in national security violations in Tibet.

The arrests and sentencing of Tibetans for such alleged crimes underscore Beijing's continuing drive to destroy the influence of men and women whose views of life in Tibetan regions of China go against official Chinese narratives.

#### Xinjiang

In Xinjiang, to the north of Tibet, officials are broadcasting a national security education public course for 10 days, according to an April 14 statement on the website of the Department of Justice of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

"Through a variety of online and offline propaganda and education activities, we will further promote the overall national security concept to be deeply rooted in the hearts of the people and build a common national security defense line," the statement said.

Other activities were held in specific areas of the vast region, home to more than 11 million Uyghurs.

National security themes were promoted on educational billboards and banners in the People's Park in Ghulja, called Yining in Chinese, capital of the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture, beginning on April 7. On the same day, authorities held a publicizing activity on the laws and regulations on overall national security and border security was held in Tajik township of Pishan county in Hotan prefecture.

The Hongmiaozi police station under Shaibak district's Bureau of Public Security in Urumqi, Xinjiang's capital, held a public lecture on China's Cybersecurity Law and Anti-Espionage Law in many communities on April 13. On the same day, the Public Security Bureau in Akesu prefecture held a police camp where children learned about security awareness to improve their ability to recognize acts that endanger national security.

*Translated by Luisetta Mudie and by Tenzin Palmo for RFA Tibetan. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.*

#### **It helped China enforce zero-Covid. Now the community 'grid' network is going 'professional'**

11 April 2024, Phoebe Zhang, [SCMP](#)

A 'basic system of professional community workers' must be built within five years, Communist Party and State Council say in joint notice

Network will aim to ‘maintain social stability and consolidate the party’s long-term rule’, as Beijing continues drive to strengthen central control



President Xi Jinping, whose inspection trips regularly include community work sites, has called on party cells at the community level to become real “fortresses” and build a real connection with people on the ground. Photo: Weibo/Xinhua

China has rolled out new rules to strengthen its nationwide network of community workers, the group that was once key to enforcing its “zero-Covid” strategies on the ground.

The stronger network would aim to “maintain social stability and consolidate the party’s long-term rule”, China’s cabinet and the ruling Communist Party’s central decision-making body said in a joint notice released on Wednesday.

According to the State Council and the party’s Central Committee, a “basic system of professional community workers” must be built within five years. Workers’ political awareness and skills must also be enhanced, with secure pay, the document said.

It comes amid a drive in recent years to strengthen central control, as Beijing seeks ways to minimise risk and conflict down the line to the lowest levels of governance to ensure social stability.

Last year, the Ministry of Public Security pledged to deploy more officers to police stations, and rural and urban residential communities, to defuse the risk of social unrest.

President Xi Jinping’s trips around the country regularly include community work sites. He has also called on party cells at the community level to become real “fortresses” against challenges to the party’s rule and build a real connection with people on the ground. According to Wednesday’s notice, community workers are those who take part in party-building, social management and services at the grass-roots level. They are either assigned to the posts from other state-related bodies or recruited from within the community.

Existing community “grid” workers, such as those recruited during the Covid years to track public

movement, could also be incorporated into the teams if they had the required qualifications, the notice said. The top priority in hiring should be a “political standard”, in that the workers “follow the party’s lead, obey laws and disciplines, and are enthusiastic to serve the people”.

The notice set a target of 18 community workers for every 10,000 residents, encouraging each region to recruit people from nearby neighbourhoods, with priority given to college graduates and military veterans.

The teams will serve the community in a “grid” system, carrying out door-to-door visits to pair with residents in need of help and run errands for them if needed.

In return, the workers will be paid wages on a par with the local average and enjoy social security benefits. There will also be awards for those taking part in emergency or natural disaster rescue and recovery missions.

The “grid” system is the government’s decades-old social management and surveillance tool, which divides cities and counties into smaller zones. The person in charge of each zone must report to the local government regularly, and be ready to take the blame if things go wrong under their watch.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, with their border and movement controls, the grid system became even more active. “Grid controllers” were tasked with reporting unusual activities to their superiors, keeping an eye on residents’ health and ensuring food and medicine supply as entire communities were locked down.

But concerns were also raised about the invasion of privacy and overzealous enforcement.

As local governments imposed stringent anti-pandemic restrictions, grid workers sometimes took unduly radical measures to carry out orders on keeping transmissions down. People complained of workers breaking into their homes to disinfect the furniture, and even putting down pets.

### Chinese Communist Party Suffocates Christians; The West Should Take Heed.

08 April 2024, Uzay Bulut, [Europe Conservative](#)

Wang Yi, a Christian pastor in China, regularly asked during his sermons that Chinese President Xi Jinping and his regime repent of their sins. He also publicly stated the Church should be separate from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In response, he and his wife, Jiang Rong, were arrested by Chinese authorities along with over 100 members of his church. Pastor Wang led the Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu. At the time of his arrest, the church had hundreds of worshippers.



A closed trial was held in December 2019 and Pastor Wang was given no access to a lawyer. He was sentenced to nine years in prison for engaging in the “subversion of state power” and “illegal business activity,” also known as “crime of fraud.” The pastor was stripped of his political rights for three years and fined 50,000 yuan (\$6.9k USD).

According to ChinaAid, an international Christian human rights organization, At the height of the Sinicization of Christianity, Wang Yi released ‘A Declaration for the Sake of the Christian Faith,’ which over 400 house church pastors and leaders signed with their real names. This document resulted in his arrest.

The U.S. State Department’s Office of International Religious Freedom issued a statement regarding Pastor Wang on October 20, 2023:

Pastor Wang has not been given permission to speak to his family by phone or receive visits from them in the past two years. He has only been allowed to see his wife once since his initial arrest. It is unacceptable that the Chinese government is denying him regular in-person visits and communication with his family, including phone calls, and that he has not been allowed a Bible, notebook or pen.

Pastor Wang remains imprisoned. Meanwhile, the CCP’s crackdown on Christians continues.

On 12 January 2024, another pastor in China, Kan Xiaoyong, was sentenced to fourteen years in prison for “using superstition to undermine the law,” and engaging in business “fraud.” His wife, Wang Fengying, was sentenced to four years. A co-worker, Chu Xinyu, was sentenced to ten years. Another three defendants received three-year verdicts. According to the Bitter Winter, which covers religious liberty and human rights related issues in China, those heavy prison sentences aim at “destroying the successful Discipleship Home Network.”

Bob Fu, a Chinese-American pastor and founder of ChinaAid, explains that, in China, this accusation called “crime of fraud” is common. A Christian who tithes by putting an offering in a church’s donation box might be arrested for engaging in “the crime of fraud.” Pastors who preach online, or those Christians who donate online to churches, also face these accusations.

“Hundreds or perhaps thousands of house church leaders have been arrested and charged with the so-called crime of ‘business fraud.’ Simply, the Communist Party has criminalized tithing and offering,” Fu said. “Their logic is that [these churches] are an illegal, unregistered organization. They do not use the word ‘church.’ They do not refer to the church as a ‘religious institution’ so that they will not be criticized by the foreigners; so they use this so-called business crime or fraud.”

On 26 January 2024, ChinaAid published a report entitled “Crime of Fraud: A New Era of Persecution against Christians by the Chinese Communist Party”:

For decades, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has sought to dismantle Christian churches who refuse to register with the government-run Three Self Patriotic Movement. In the name of Sinicization, that is recreating religion to better align with Party ideals, Christians have been targeted with repeated arrests, raids, and harassment at the hands of authorities. The CCP ushered in a new era of persecution beginning in 2018 by charging pastors, church leaders, and other Christians with crimes of fraud.

Since 2018, explains ChinaAid, the charges would often follow these steps:

Authorities prohibit house churches from being registered as legal entities. They accuse house churches of being illegal groups. They accuse house church leaders of being illegal clergy and label house churches’ collection of offerings as fraud. Many churches and pastors, as well as Christian individuals, are victims of false fraud charges. Evangelist Chen Lijun, for instance, was arrested on August 13, 2022 in Luanchuan county. This was simply because he purchased some Christian books online. He was quickly charged on suspicion of fraud.

In its 2023 report, ChinaAid shed light on the CCP’s open oppression of Christians in the ongoing campaign referred to as the “Sinicization of Christianity.” According to the report, Sinicization aims to undermine and disband churches, replacing Christian faith with Communist Party loyalty. The Sinicization of Christianity is codified into Chinese law.

The persecution of churches and Christians in China, according to the report, takes place through the oppression of churches and interruption of regular church activities. It further includes opposing Christianity, restricting evangelism, and suppressing social activities, persecution of justice-seeking Christians in public spheres, persecution in economic, social, cultural, and academic spheres, and fraud charges against house churches for receiving tithes and offerings. “Few Christians and churches, if any at all, were left untouched by the persecution efforts of the Chinese government,” says the report.

Another way China attempts to “Sinicize” Christianity is by changing or rewriting the Bible. CBN News reported in 2023:

China’s ruling regime announced in 2019 its plans to release a new translation of the Bible that will include Confucian and Buddhist principles.

“This new translation ... would really support the Communist Party,” explained Todd Nettleton, the spokesman for The Voice of the Martyrs (VOM)—a persecution watchdog serving Christians.

One example of a Bible passage rewritten by the CCP is John 8. This Bible story centers on Jesus' love and corrective compassion for a woman caught in adultery. In the real version from the Bible, Jesus says, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her," after which the crowd begins to leave. Then Jesus tells her, "Go now and sin no more." In a version reportedly found in a Chinese textbook published in September 2020, the crowd disperses, but the text falsely claims that "When everyone went out, Jesus stoned the woman himself."

Tina Ramirez is the president of Hardwired, an organization vocally critical of the Chinese Communist Party. She said that the CCP's rewriting of the Bible is an attempt to force Christians to leave their faith. A full list of ChinaAid's past annual reports shows an increase in persecution cases over the years.

Pastor Fu further explains that, in China's government-sanctioned churches, pastors are forced to pledge absolute allegiance to Xi Jinping's thoughts. The pastor should install a Communist Party flag and place a picture of Xi Jinping behind the pulpit. Before service starts, the Communist national anthem should be sung. If none of these steps occur, then the regime says the church is not compatible with socialism and communism. As a result, church pastors are intimidated, and some are even arrested.

Fu says that the Chinese Communist Party prescribes that those under 18 years old, students, Communist Party members, communist Youth League members, and civil servants are not allowed to enter any church building. This prohibition includes state-controlled churches as well. China has entered the period of the worst persecution against Christians in the 40 years since the cultural revolution, Fu concludes.

This persecution targets Christian children as well. A 2020 report by the human rights NGO Jubilee Campaign, entitled "China Bans Faith for All Children," describes the religious freedom violations that Christian, Tibetan Buddhist, Uyghur, and Falun Gong children face in China. According to the report, Christian children are punished, threatened, excluded, and rebuked for their families' and their own religious affiliation ... Christian children under the age of 18 years are prohibited from attending religious worship services and events ... They are prohibited from receiving religious education and face persecution for revealing their religious affiliation in school.

Christian children and their teachers are forced into anti-religious and pro-atheist indoctrination excursions and programs ... Christian families are wary of private worship as a result of the government's multi-faceted crackdown on religion.

In May 2018, for instance, 13-year-old Wang Chenyang (pseudonym) of Zhucheng, Shandong Province, was restricted from attending his school's Children's Day

festival performance because he was a Christian. Wang reported that, after finalizing the rehearsal on the day of their performance, the school's principal informed the class that any student with a religious affiliation would be prohibited from participating in the performance.

China has managed to deploy artificial intelligence and facial recognition to track Christians. The Communist Party deploys facial recognition cameras in churches. If they refuse, they are shut down. Jin Mingri, also known as Ezra Jin, was the pastor of the Zion Church of Beijing, one of the city's largest house churches with nearly 1,500 members. In 2018, it refused to install surveillance cameras in its sanctuary, so the authorities shut down the church and placed the pastor under house arrest. Reuters reports that the church is now banned and its materials have been confiscated.

According to Open Doors, an organization that monitors Christian persecution on a global scale, there are over 96 million Christians in China. Open Doors reports:

The Chinese Communist Party's goal is to make sure churches don't fall out of line with official viewpoints. In the case of official churches, this means they are encouraged to praise and pledge allegiance to the Communist Party and its ideology. ... Most churches are monitored and can be shut down without warning. The CCP is persecuting Christians through many methods, including but not limited to rewriting the Bible, refusing to recognize churches as places of worship, impoverishing church communities by accusing them of "illegal business activities," prohibiting children under 18 from attending church, forcing Christian children and their teachers into pro-atheist indoctrination activities, placing surveillance cameras even on the pulpits of churches, allowing only one state-controlled church to operate within exceedingly strict limits, shutting down house churches, jailing pastors for refusing to worship the communist party ideology. Is this the type of persecution that is coming to Western nations? Given the hostility towards Christianity of many left-wing and woke political parties and organizations in the West, Western Christians should take heed.

### **Li Qiang: Middleman for Xi?**

03 April 2024, Natalie Liu, [VOA News](#)

Speculation has been spreading about the future, role, and place in China's power structure of Premier Li Qiang since the unexplained cancellation of a routine press conference he was expected to hold last month. It was arguably the biggest news about Li, a figure largely unknown to the outside world, since he took office a year ago.

Analysts tell VOA that to better know Li, it is important to understand his place in China's leadership structure – highly centralized under Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping's tight rule – and the two men's past together, which stretches back two decades.

#### Path to premiership

Li was born in 1959 in a rural area of China's coastal province Zhejiang. His family is rooted in the farming communities of Zhejiang, and Li started out working as an industrial laborer at the age of 17 after he graduated from high school.

His background differs sharply from that of his boss, Xi Jinping, whose father was one of China's first generation of Communist Party leaders. His background is also different from that of his immediate predecessor, Li Keqiang, who studied at the prestigious Beijing University and whose father was a local party official.

Li Qiang's climb within the ranks of the Chinese Communist Party began after studying at an agricultural college in his home province. After graduating in 1982, Li did not work in factories or in the rural communities again.

From 2000 to 2002, Li presided over the Zhejiang provincial bureau of commerce. In 2002, at age 43, he rose to become the youngest Communist Party secretary of Wenzhou, known to be a capital of entrepreneurs, in his native Zhejiang province.

That same year, Xi Jinping moved from Fujian, another coastal province, to lead Zhejiang as its party secretary, directly overseeing Wenzhou and other municipalities.

It was during Xi's tenure in Zhejiang, from 2002 until he left for Shanghai in 2007, that the two men had opportunities to know each other. From 2004 to 2005, Li served as the chief of staff to Zhejiang's provincial Communist Party committee, essentially Xi's chief of staff. His portfolio soon expanded to include membership in the provincial Communist Party standing committee, deputy provincial party secretary, head of the provincial political and legal affairs committee, and governor of Zhejiang.

Li was promoted to party secretary in neighboring Jiangsu province in 2016 and a year later to party secretary of Shanghai. He was placed in the premiership in March 2023.

"It is fair to say that all of his later promotions happened thanks to Xi," Xia Ming, a China-born political science professor at the City University of New York, said in a phone interview with VOA.

#### Wenzhou model

"It's worth noting that Li is closely tied to what is known as the 'Wenzhou model,' which resembles what is known in the West as liberal economics," Xia added.

What enabled the private entrepreneur-led "Wenzhou model" to succeed, Xia said, was local Communist Party officials' non-interference at the time, which stands in contrast with the party's heavy-handedness today.

"Now that Li has joined Xi's cabinet, whatever model he might have been tied to will have to succumb to the Xi model," Hu Ping told VOA. Hu Ping is a native of China's south-central Sichuan province and received his degrees from Beijing University in the 1980s, before entering into exile in the United States. Hu Ping is editor emeritus of *China Spring* magazine.

Steve Tsang, author of *The Political Thought of Xi Jinping*, explained to VOA in a phone interview from London how he sees the Xi model: "What Xi Jinping is trying to do is to create one country, one people, one ideology, one party, one leader," Tsang said.

Unlike Li Keqiang, who landed the job due to support from party elders, Tsang added, Li Qiang was hand-picked by Xi and is expected to do Xi's bidding.

While Li Qiang's appointment to succeed Li Keqiang is seen as an attempt to solidify the above model, there were signs that Li Qiang's ties with the Chinese business community from his years working in Zhejiang, Jiangsu and Shanghai might be tapped to help Xi solve some of the country's economic challenges.

#### Potential mediator

*The Economist* reported in March of last year that Li Qiang had a hand in persuading one of China's most famous businessmen, Jack Ma, to return to China. Ma, like Li, a native of Zhejiang, had reportedly fallen out with Xi amid crackdowns on private enterprises and Ma's increasing popularity, both at home and abroad. Ma was said gone into self-imposed exile in Japan.

Li was "trying to reassure wealthy private entrepreneurs that, though they should know their place, they are still valued by the party," according to the article.

Despite assurances to Ma and private entrepreneurs, China's economy continues to face big challenges, including falling foreign direct investment and outflow of capital.

Li Qiang's predecessor, Li Keqiang, was known for his straight talk on China's economy and calling for a more domestic welfare-centered approach, in contrast to the state power-centric and expansionist model put forth by Xi.

In May 2020, Li Keqiang told reporters at the National People's Congress press conference that more than 40 percent of China's population of 1.4 billion live on \$143 a month, remarks seen as a rebuke of the official line that poverty has been eliminated all throughout the country under Xi's leadership.

Li Keqiang even developed an index for measuring China's economic growth that was deemed more

reliable than local government figures because it looked at railway cargo volume, electric consumption and loans disbursed by banks.

Li Qiang, who stepped into Li Keqiang's role a year ago, is widely seen as a Xi protégé whose key job is doing the bidding of China's leader. Whether that might include other mediation efforts on behalf of Xi in China's political and economic power struggles remains to be seen.

"To be a middleman, or power broker, you need to have a certain amount of sway on both sides," said City University of New York's Xia Ming. Putting his loyalist credentials aside, Xia said Li is also under pressure to show his ability to take care of the Chinese Communist Party's pocketbook.

Mao Zedong's old saying that political power grows out of the barrel of a gun has since been amended, Xia adds. To stay in power, the money bag is a key factor as well.

### **Xi's article on putting people first to be published**

03 April 2024, [Xinhua](#)

BEIJING -- An article by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, on putting the people first will be published on Monday.

The article by Xi, also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, will be published in this year's seventh issue of the Qishi Journal, a flagship magazine of the CPC Central Committee.

It is a collection of excerpts from Xi's relevant discourses between November 2012 and December 2023.

The article stresses that the people are the creators of history and true heroes, highlighting the original aspiration and mission of Chinese Communists to pursue happiness for the Chinese people and rejuvenation for the Chinese nation.

Standing on the people's side represents the fundamental political stance of the CPC, and it is what distinguishes a Marxist political party from other political parties, says the article, adding that everything the Party does is to realize, safeguard, and advance the fundamental interests of the greatest possible majority of the people.

The article lauds the people as the decisive force in building China into a great modern socialist country in all respects and emphasizes a people-centered development philosophy.

It is important to ensure that the gains of modernization benefit all the people fairly, says the article, calling for more notable and substantive progress in promoting common prosperity for all.

# PROTESTS, DETENTIONS AND OTHER NEWS FROM THE PRC

## Children not spared in China's persecution of human rights defenders' families

23 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The practice of collective punishment dates from the days of Mao Zedong's dictatorship and it continues to this day in a China which claims to practice what is sought to be called a globally superior "whole process people's democracy". Whatever this Communist Party of China's "theoretical breakthrough" jargon means, there is very little to praise it when it punishes severely even children of those who have dared to be critical of the governing dispensation.

Releasing its annual report on the situation of human rights defenders in China in 2023 on Apr 15, *If I Disobey, My Family Will Suffer: Collective punishment of human rights defenders' families in China*, the US-based Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) has highlighted Chinese authorities' punitive measures against human rights defenders' families, including even newborns.

"Chinese authorities are punishing their families, including young children to penalize human rights defenders, rights lawyers, themselves. Even the Chinese law provides no legal basis for this perverse practice, which is forbidden in international law," CHRD Director Renee Xia has said.

"The most heart-breaking part in really inflicting so much pain is the harm done to children. Children growing up from a young age watching their parents being mistreated and persecuted leaves a long-term psychological trauma."

The report is based on testimony from a dozen people affected by collective punishment last year, and redacted certain identifying details to protect them from official reprisals.

"While this report focuses on 2023, Chinese authorities have used these tactics for decades, inflicting tremendous harm with impunity," it said.

"Seeking redress often triggers more police harassment, brutality, and baseless legal prosecutions," it added.

It said authorities threatened and harmed the children of rights advocates, including by imposing foreign exit bans, forcing them to drop out of school and detaining them in psychiatric wards and orphanages.

"The Chinese Communist Party's collective punishment of human rights defenders' families is an informal or hidden policy carried out by government authorities," the report cited one activist as saying.

In one severe case, He Fangmei – an imprisoned campaigner for vaccine safety and for victims of defective vaccines – had her young children placed in a psychiatric hospital following her and her husband's detentions.

After He gave birth, her newborn child was also placed in the institution, the report said.

Likewise, the family of human rights lawyer Wang Quanzhang was subjected to intense harassment, and his young son denied education through official pressure on schools. The boy's mother Li Wenzu – also an activist – has said that last month he was once again forced out of a school he had been attending for just 10 days after police showed up there.

The report also shed some light on the fate of Peng Lifa, an activist who disappeared after he placed banners denouncing President Xi Jinping and the country's Covid policies.

“To prevent his family from speaking out, Chinese police have... put members of his family and relatives under surveillance, and cut off all contact with each other and the outside world,” the report said.

CHRD is a network of Chinese and international activists promoting human rights and empowering rights defenders in China.

### China reveals it executed scientist for spying in 2016 in documentary about 'shocking' cases

15 April 2024, William Zheng, [SCMP](#)



Huang Yu's case featured in a government-produced documentary aired on state television. Photo: CCTV

- Programme on state television discloses new details and punishments from espionage cases as part of a campaign marking National Security Education Day
- State security ministry releases details of researcher Huang Yu, who was executed for selling 'core secrets' to an unnamed foreign intelligence agency

Authorities in Beijing have revealed that a Chinese scientist who was convicted in 2015 of selling state secrets to foreign spy agencies was executed in 2016, one of several “shocking” spy cases.

The death sentence and execution were disclosed in a new documentary produced by the Ministry of State Security, China's top counter-espionage agency, which profiled 10 prominent spy cases from the past.

The documentary – *Led by Innovation, National Security Sharpens the Sword* – which was aired on Sunday by state broadcaster CCTV and has been posted to the ministry's social media page, is part of a campaign to mark the annual National Security Education Day.

The event, which is promoted by various local governments, including Hong Kong and Macau, is also intended to remind the public to remain vigilant about national security threats and report suspicious acts.

According to the documentary, Huang Yu, then a researcher at a top secret communication system development project, sent a note to “the website of a certain country's spy agency” containing classified Chinese military codes.

Huang was bitter after being removed from a unit that was working on the project due to poor work performance and had indicated he wanted to defect, the report said.

After the authenticity of the codes had been confirmed, Huang was recruited by the unnamed foreign spy agency and given training in Hong Kong and Bangkok. The documentary said he not only sold “core secrets” through his work, but also duped his wife – an employee at the same institution – into copying confidential material so he could pass it on in return for additional payments.

Huang was said to have leaked “a shocking amount” of confidential information about the communication systems used by the Communist Party, government agencies, the military and industries such as finance and telecoms. These included design, technical specifications, secret algorithms, source codes and programmes, the documentary said.

Huang was handed the maximum penalty for spying that caused “serious harm” to China's national security and was executed in May 2016.

The documentary also revealed new details about a former researcher from Taiwan who had been stealing secrets from mainland China while based in the Czech Republic.

Cheng Yu-chin, who was sentenced in 2022 to seven years in prison for espionage, “long had Taiwan independence ideas” and had been recruited by Taiwan's intelligence agency while studying for his PhD in Prague, the programme said.

Cheng had been paid NT\$2.76 million (US\$85,467) by the Taiwanese government to steal intelligence-related research reports and identify potential infiltration targets during multiple visits to the mainland, according to the documentary.

Cheng had previously worked as an assistant to Cho Jung-tai, the former secretary general of the Taiwan cabinet, who has been selected to be the island's next premier.

The documentary also profiled the case of Lee Henely Hu Xiang, a businessman from Belize who was sentenced in 2021 to 11 years in prison for helping to fund the Hong Kong protests, as well as the cases of the “two Michaels” – Canadians Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig – who were detained in China in 2018, in apparent retaliation for the arrest in Vancouver of Meng Wanzhou.

Meng, the former chief financial officer of Chinese telecoms equipment giant Huawei Technologies had been detained in Canada on a US warrant, which the documentary said showed how China had fought the West’s long-arm jurisdiction and efforts to undermine the country’s political stability.

Quoting media reports that Spavor reached a C\$7 million (US\$5 million) settlement with the Canadian government in March this year, the documentary said Canada’s “slander” in labelling their cases as “arbitrary detentions” had been “self-defeating”.

The documentary concluded with what Chinese regulators have called a “rectification” of Shanghai-based consultancy firm Capvision Partners. The due-diligence company had been raided by authorities last year over national security risks in areas such as defence, technology, energy and resources, and medicine.

China said some of Capvision’s clients had close relationships with foreign governments and military intelligence agencies.

“After foreign countries mastered this important and sensitive information, they implemented precise sanctions on a series of Chinese companies, causing significant harm to our country’s industrial development and economic security,” the programme said.

Chen Yixin, the state security minister, reiterated the ministry’s priorities in an article published on Monday in the Communist Party’s top theoretical journal Qishi.

He said China’s national security agencies will focus on major and outstanding risks, including “anti-subversion, anti-hegemony, anti-separatism, anti-terrorism, and anti-espionage struggles”.

Also on Monday, a commentary in the Communist Party mouthpiece People’s Daily said China has made breakthroughs in safeguarding national security in the past decade, making it a leading country “with the best sense of security”.

“We have withstood and fought back against extreme external suppression and containment, and on a series of major issues involving Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet, maritime affairs, and human rights, we have fought hard and won one tough battle after another,” it said.

## China's top legislator meets DPRK top leader

14 April 2024, [China.org](https://china.org)

Zhao Leji, chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee, met with Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) here on Saturday. Zhao, also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, is heading a Chinese party and government delegation on an official goodwill visit to the DPRK.

Zhao extended to Kim the kind regards and good wishes of General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee Xi Jinping.



*Zhao Leji, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee, meets with Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in Pyongyang, the DPRK, April 13, 2024. Zhao is heading a Chinese party and government delegation on an official goodwill visit to the DPRK. (Xinhua/Liu Weibing)*

Zhao said that appointed by General Secretary Xi and the CPC Central Committee, he is heading the Chinese party and government delegation to pay an official goodwill visit to the DPRK and attend the opening ceremony of the "China-DPRK Friendship Year," and that he was warmly received by the WPK and the DPRK government.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and the DPRK, and the journey of the past 75 years epitomized good neighborliness and friendship as the two countries stood side by side, fighting together and sharing a common destiny and common development, he said.

Under the new situation, China is ready to work with the DPRK, in accordance with the lofty will of the top leaders of both parties and both countries and common aspirations of the two peoples, to push the

China-DPRK relationship for greater development, Zhao said.

Zhao pointed out that the China-DPRK friendship, established and cultivated meticulously by the elder generations of revolutionists of both parties and both countries, has withstood various tests of the changing international situation and is an invaluable asset of the two countries.

Zhao said that the CPC and the Chinese government have always treated the China-DPRK relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, and it is China's unwavering policy to maintain, consolidate and develop the China-DPRK traditional friendly and cooperative relations.

China is willing to work with the DPRK, under the strategic guidance of the top leaders of both parties and both countries, to promote bilateral practical and mutually beneficial cooperation to attain new achievements, continue to strongly support each other and safeguard the shared interests of the two countries, he said. China stands ready for close coordination with the DPRK to ensure the success of all activities of the "China-DPRK Friendship Year," he added.

China, in accordance with the strategic plan laid out at the 20th CPC National Congress, is comprehensively advancing the building of a strong country and the great cause of national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization, Zhao stressed.

China is willing to intensify coordination in development and deepen bilateral cooperation with the DPRK, and to continuously enrich China-DPRK relations, he said.

Kim asked Zhao to convey his sincere greetings and best wishes to General Secretary Xi.

Kim said that appointed by General Secretary Xi and the CPC Central Committee, the Chinese party and government delegation's visit to the DPRK and attendance at the opening ceremony of the "DPRK-China Friendship Year" fully demonstrate General Secretary Xi's friendliness over DPRK-China relations and strongly demonstrate the profound and unbreakable foundation of bilateral ties.

Kim extended his warm congratulations over the development achievements that China has made in the pursuit of its socialist cause under the strong leadership of General Secretary Xi and the CPC.

He stressed that the DPRK-China relations have boasted a profound historical tradition, having withstood various tests and been passed on from generation to generation.

Kim said that it is the unwavering policy of the WPK and the DPRK government to consolidate and develop the traditional friendly and cooperative relations between the two countries. The DPRK-China relationship is continuously developing to new and higher stages in line with the demands of the new era, he added.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic ties and the "DPRK-China Friendship Year," and the DPRK stands ready to work with China to strengthen cooperation in various fields, increase exchanges of experience in state governance, deepen traditional friendship, and write a new chapter for bilateral ties, he said.

Upon leaving Pyongyang, the Chinese party and government delegation was seen off at the airport by officials including Choe Ryong Hae, a member of the Presidium of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK and chairman of the Standing Committee of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK.

On Saturday afternoon, Zhao visited and extended his regards to staff members of the Chinese embassy and representatives of overseas Chinese in the DPRK.

### Covering China brings surveillance, harassment, report finds

11 April 2024, [NewsGram](#)

*Reporting conditions in China have improved since the global pandemic but foreign journalists still face obstacles including visa problems, surveillance and harassment, according to a new survey.*

Covering China brings surveillance:- Reporting conditions in China have improved since the global pandemic but foreign journalists still face obstacles including visa problems, surveillance and harassment, according to a new survey.

The annual survey by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China, or FCCC, found that 81% of respondents said reporting conditions have "somewhat" improved, but nearly all the journalists said the reporting environment does not meet international standards. Key issues remain, including difficulty in obtaining long-term visas, which leaves foreign news bureaus understaffed; reporters being obstructed by police or other officials while on assignment, and harassment when reporting in Xinjiang and border regions.

The FCCC each year surveys more than 155 correspondents from Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. Its latest report is based on 101 responses to that survey which looks at working conditions for foreign media.

A spokesperson for China's embassy told VOA via email that the FCCC members "account for less than half of the foreign journalists in China, which means it cannot represent all of them," and that China has made efforts to support foreign media.

Referring to the FCCC as an "illegal organization, never recognized by China," the email added that Beijing is "against using the freedom of the press as an excuse to smear China with false information."



In response to concerns over visas, the spokesperson said, "In 2021, China and the US reached some common grounds. China has implemented what's been agreed, while the US has not fully delivered."

Accessing visas is one of the main difficulties cited in the survey. About one-third of respondents said their bureaus remain understaffed because of difficulty in extending or successfully applying for new visas.

Chinese authorities have mostly issued short-term visas. In 2023, only one U.S. outlet was able to get accreditation, the FCCC found. And Canadian media have had no resident reporter in China for four years. Respondents said that as pandemic restrictions eased, they have returned to an uncertainty over what stories will result in surveillance or trips being cut short.

Four out of five of those surveyed said they experienced interference and harassment, and more than half reported being blocked from reporting or filming by police or other officials.

Nearly all those who reported from Xinjiang or Tibet said they experienced increased harassment. But journalists who reported or tried to travel to other border regions in the country also reported harassment.

After Xinjiang, the area with the most reported obstacles was the border with Russia, with 79% of journalists trying to report from there experiencing difficulties.

One journalist at a European outlet, whom the FCCC does not name, described being followed by several vehicles during a reporting trip to a town along the Russian border.

"They did not interfere during any of our interviews, although they did reach out to at least one interviewee afterwards. When we checked into our hotel, the hotel staff referred to us as 'the journalists state security had warned them about' earlier," the reporter said.

Similar experiences were reported by journalists who traveled to Inner Mongolia. The FCCC detailed three cases of plainclothes individuals warning people to not speak with journalists or of following news crews.

The FCCC in its report notes, "Foreign journalists are, according to China's own regulations, free to report on a wide range of topics and speak to whomever they want."

The survey showed an increase in journalists being "invited for tea" – a tactic where Chinese officials invite foreign media to an informal meeting. During the meetings, journalists are asked about their coverage and while the FCCC says the exchanges are usually "cordial," it notes they can be used as a form of intimidation.

Surveillance is another concern, with respondents seeing more sources declining interviews or requesting anonymity.

Nearly all those surveyed said they believe they are targeted with digital surveillance through communication apps or that their homes or offices are bugged. Four of those surveyed said that officials referenced information that could have been known only if the authorities had access to private accounts or devices.

The FCCC says the restrictions and harassment prevents media from reporting a more balanced and nuanced picture of life in China.

"The result is coverage of China that cannot fully capture its massively complex dynamics," the FCCC said in its report. "Correspondents, restricted in where they can travel and with whom they can speak, no longer have the luxury of delving deeply into topics and painting a nuanced picture of the country. The result is coverage of China that is narrower in scope and less representative."

China has a poor press freedom record, ranking 179 out of 180 countries, where 1 shows the best environment, on the Press Freedom Index.

Media watchdog Reporters Without Borders, which compiles the index, said China is conducting a "campaign of repression against journalism and the right to information worldwide." VOA/SP

## China and Thailand to Carry Out Joint Moon Exploration

05 April 2024, [Xinhua](#)

On April 5th, China's National Space Administration and Thailand's Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation jointly signed a "Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation for Exploration and Peaceful Utilization of Outer Space" as well as a "Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation on an International Lunar Research Station."

Xinhua reported that "China and Thailand will establish joint committees and working groups to strengthen cooperation in the fields of space exploration, space applications, building space capacity. This will be done through joint space projects, scientific exchange programs, personnel training plans, data and information exchange, and organization of joint thematic workshops and scientific seminars."

"China's Chang'e-7 mission [planned for 2026] will reportedly carry a 'Global Space Weather Monitoring' device developed by Thailand. This will be the first time a Thai scientific instrument enters deep space from Earth orbit. China's Chang'e-8 mission [planned for 2028] provides opportunities for international collaboration, with the ability to carry payloads of 200 kilograms. Thailand has submitted several applications regarding lunar surface robots and scientific payloads. The applications are currently being processed."

"China has already signed space cooperation agreements with more than 10 countries and international organizations."

### China Accused of Buying Off Strategic Island Nation With Bottled Water

03 April 2024, [NewsWeek](#)



Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu speaks at the United Nations climate summit in Dubai on December 1, 2023. China has been accused of buying off the Maldives with a million bottles of water, causing a fresh controversy over the strategic island nation. KARIM SAHIB/AFP VIA GETTY

China has been accused of buying off the the strategic Indian Ocean island nation of the Maldives with a million bottles of water from melting Tibetan glaciers. "The Chinese Xizang [Chinese name for Tibet] Autonomous Region has extended a generous donation of 1500 [tonnes] drinking water to the Maldives, aimed at alleviating water shortages on the islands," Public Service Media, the state broadcaster of the Maldives, reported on March 27. However, some social media users alleged that China's donation was for the personal use of Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu.

"It wasn't announced officially because Muizzu wanted to use this at Muleeaage [the official residence of the Maldives president]," one user from the Maldives said on X, formerly Twitter.

"We are not aware of the specifics you mentioned, and please refer to competent authorities for your specific question," the Chinese Embassy in Washington, D.C., told *Newsweek* in a reply by email. The Maldives' foreign ministry didn't reply to *Newsweek's* request for comment by publication time.

Muizzu, who came to power last year, has increasingly adopted a pro-China position while relegating the Maldives' traditional ties with India. The U.S. has taken note of Beijing's growing influence in the Maldives, a strategic island nation that sits on the critical waterways connecting the Indian Ocean to the Middle East and Africa. The Maldives' foreign ministry has denied the allegations, saying that the drinking water was a donation by Yan Jinhai, the chairman of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, rather than a gift to

Muizzu, AFP reported on March 29. Yan, a senior Chinese politician in charge of Tibet, visited the Maldivian capital, Malé, in November 2023 to boost ties between China and the Maldives, the Maldivian President's Office said last year. "Produced within the pristine mountains of the Xizang Autonomous Region, the bottled water donation signifies a gesture of solidarity and support from China to the Maldives during times of need," Public Service Media, Maldives' state broadcaster reported on March 27.

The U.S. opened its first embassy in the Maldives in 2023 to boost its presence in the Indian Ocean region, while recognizing the importance of Maldives.

"The United States is committed to strengthening cooperation with the Maldives, a key partner in ensuring a free, open, secure, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu, told the Press Trust of India in February.

The Maldives faces a shortage of fresh water while also living with the threat of rising sea levels caused by global warming.

"The only available natural water resources are rain and groundwater, both of which are highly vulnerable to climate change," Abdulla Naseer, the Maldives' former Minister of State for Environment, Climate Change and Technology, told the United Nations in March 2023.

China donated five seawater desalination systems to the Maldives to help with the drinking water shortage, Chinese state media outlet *China Daily* reported on March 17

### China court jails 'tortured' rights activist Xu Qin for four years

01 April 2024, [RFA](#)



Veteran Chinese rights activist Xu Qin is seen in an undated photo.

Authorities in the eastern Chinese province of Jiangsu have handed a four-year jail term to veteran rights activist Xu Qin, after repeatedly delaying her trial and sentencing despite concerns over her deteriorating health, and amid reports of torture from a prominent rights group.

The Yangzhou Intermediate People's Court sentenced Xu, a key figure in the Wuhan-based China Rights Observer group founded by jailed veteran dissident Qin Yongmin, to four years' imprisonment on March 29 for "incitement to subvert state power," a charge frequently used to target peaceful critics of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, the Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch rights website reported.

It quoted Xu as telling the sentencing hearing: "I'd like to thank everyone for their care and support, and also thank my husband for his help and support. Regardless of whether it's futile or not, I must appeal. This is my right." An award-winning activist in a number of high-profile human rights cases, including that of detained human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng, Xu was detained under "residential surveillance at a designated location" in 2021, a form of incommunicado detention rights groups say puts detainees at greater risk of torture and mistreatment. Her family told RFA in earlier interviews that Xu is a stroke and heart attack survivor who suffers from high blood pressure, among other ailments.

But according to the Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch rights website, many of Xu's health problems were caused by her torture and mistreatment in detention. "During her detention and interrogation, Xu Qin was brutally tortured to extract a confession, and was held in solitary confinement for a long period of time," the website said in a report about her sentencing published on Sunday. "Xu already suffered from multiple health problems including stroke, heart attack and hypertension, and as a result [of the torture], she was left paralyzed and unable to stand," it said.

Since she was locked up in the detention center, Xu has started using a wheelchair, according to her lawyer.

Xu told the court on Friday that she would appeal the sentence, which came after more than two years in pretrial detention at the Yangmiao Detention Center in Yangzhou city, where she held intermittent hunger strikes in protest at a loss of communications privileges as well as a months-long ban on meetings with her lawyer, Civil Rights and Livelihood Watch said. Repeated calls to Xu's lawyer rang unanswered during office hours on Monday.

Trial was delayed

Xu's trial was delayed several times following her initial detention in May 2021, with the authorities citing only "unavoidable circumstances."

But her family says it was delayed due to her refusal to provide the state security police with a "confession." The trial was eventually held on Nov. 7, 2022, but the verdict and sentencing were also repeatedly delayed until now.

New York-based rights lawyer Chen Chuangchuang, who also heads the U.S. branch of the banned China

Democracy Party, said Chen has always been an extremely tenacious activist.

"The trial was held a long time ago, but the verdict and sentencing were delayed multiple times, which is a deliberate form of torture used by the Chinese Communist Party," Chen told RFA on Monday.

Chen said that one of the purposes of the authorities' repeated delay in pronouncing the sentence was to get Xu Qin to plead guilty, and that she had been especially targeted due to her association with Qin Yongmin.

According to the Wei quanwang rights website, the charges against Xu listed her participation in Qin's China Rights Observer and its sister organization Rose China as evidence against her.

Qin was sentenced in July 2018 to 13 years' imprisonment for "incitement to subvert state power," the latest in a string of long sentences for his peaceful dissent and attempts to build the banned China Democracy Party.

A contemporary of exiled dissident Wei Jingsheng, Qin was sentenced to eight years in prison for "counterrevolutionary propaganda and subversion" in the wake of China's Democracy Wall movement in 1981.

He served a further two years' "re-education through labor" in 1993 after he penned a controversial document titled the "Peace Charter."

Qin then served a 12-year jail term for subversion after he helped found the China Democracy Party in 1998 in spite of a ban on opposition political parties.

Xu was honored with the Lin Zhao Freedom Award for her human rights advocacy in 2022, and the Oscar China Freedom Human Rights Award last month.

Translated by Luisetta Mudie. Edited by Roseanne Gerin.

## MILITARY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

### China Ramps Up Military Activity In Tibet And Xinjiang | Why It Matters To India?

30 April 2024, [MSN](#)

The Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) has been active in the Tibetan plateau in recent weeks, carrying out a para-dropping exercise in Golmud. A dozen PLA servicemen took off in a Y-20 transport aircraft around the time of the Chinese New Year from Golmud, in Qinghai, in the northern part of the Tibetan plateau, and the drop was 60 km to the east. It is another sign that the PLA aspires to be functional in Tibet throughout the year, including in the winter months, when it is bitterly cold. More recently, at the Hotan airfield, in Xinjiang, where there is a substantial presence of the PLAAF, three Y-20 aircraft, a large plane for military transportation, were seen. Besides, Hotan has, as usual, a large number of fighters-- about 50. About half of them are the J-11, the twin engined air superiority fighter similar to the Russian Sukhoi-27 and about two decades old, and the J-7, which is an older aircraft, similar to the Russian MiG-21. Besides, a few JH-7As, a fighter bomber, are present along with a KJ-500, an airborne early warning system. Similarly, on the eastern side, at Luliang, in Yunnan, the Chinese have placed a KJ-500 along with a dozen J-11 fighters and two Y-20 heavy-lift transport aircraft. Once again, these are signs that the Chinese are strengthening their armed forces. With summer coming, the Chinese have also begun setting up new radars in the Pangta and Bamda airfields. These are in the east, opposite North-east India and Pangta, is less than 200km from the line of actual control.

### Xi shakes up China's military in rethink of how to 'fight and win' future wars

27 April 2024, [CNN](#)

China has rolled out the largest restructuring of its military in almost a decade, focusing on technology-driven strategic forces equipped for modern warfare, as Beijing vies with Washington for military primacy in a region rife with geopolitical tensions.

In a surprise move last week, Chinese leader Xi Jinping scrapped the Strategic Support Force (SSF), a military branch he created in 2015 to integrate the People's Liberation Army's space, cyber, electronic and psychological warfare capabilities as part of a sweeping overhaul of the armed forces.

In its place, Xi inaugurated the Information Support Force, which he said was "a brand-new strategic arm of the PLA and a key underpinning of coordinated development and application of the network information system."

The new force would play an important role in helping the Chinese military “fight and win in modern warfare,” he said at a ceremony last Friday.

At a news conference on the same day, a spokesperson for China’s Defense Ministry appeared to suggest the SSF was effectively broken into three units – the Information Support Force, the Aerospace Force and the Cyberspace Force – which will answer directly to the Central Military Commission, the body at the top of the military chain of command headed by Xi.

Under the new structure, the PLA now consists of four services – the army, navy, air force and the rocket force – plus four arms: the three units spun off from the SSF and the Joint Logistic Support Force, according to ministry spokesperson Wu Qian.

Experts on the Chinese military say the reorganization enhances Xi’s direct control over the PLA’s strategic capabilities and underscores China’s ambitions in better mastering AI and other new technologies to prepare for what it calls the “intelligentized warfare” of the future.

The restructuring follows Xi’s sweeping corruption purge of the PLA last year, which ensnared powerful generals and shook up the rocket force, an elite branch overseeing China’s fast-expanding arsenal of nuclear and ballistic missiles.

The Information Support Force will be led by top generals from the now-defunct SSF.

SSF deputy commander Bi Yi was appointed commander of the new unit, while Li Wei, the SSF’s political commissar, will take the same role in the Information Support Force, according to state-run news agency Xinhua.

There was no mention of any new appointment for SSF commander Ju Qiansheng, who last year spurred speculation when he disappeared from public view amid a flurry of military purges before eventually resurfacing at a conference in late January.

‘Better visibility’

Longtime PLA watchers say the latest reorganization is unlikely the result of the recent corruption purges, but rather a reflection that the SSF wasn’t an ideal organizational format for the Chinese military.

“It shows that the SSF was not a satisfactory arrangement. It reduced Xi’s visibility of important functions and did not really improve coordination between space, cyber, and network defense forces,” said Joel Wuthnow, a senior research fellow at the Pentagon-funded National Defense University.

Before its disbandment, the SSF had two principal units – the Aerospace Systems Department overseeing the PLA’s space operations and reconnaissance, and the Network System Department tasked with cyber, electronic and psychological warfare capabilities.

“I think the new structure will give Xi better visibility into what is happening in space, cyberspace, and

network management. These functions will now be supervised at his level and not through the Strategic Support Force, which served as a middleman,” Wuthnow said.

The lack of such visibility could bear high risks, especially during times of heightened tension and deep distrust between Beijing and Washington.

Last year, the US shot down a Chinese surveillance balloon after it traversed the continental United States. The incident caused a fresh crisis between the two powers and plunged bilateral relations into a deep freeze for months.

Though US intelligence officials said the balloon was part of an extensive surveillance program run by the Chinese military, Xi may not have been aware of the mission.

US President Joe Biden said last June that the Chinese leader didn’t know about the balloon and was “very embarrassed” when it was shot down after it floated off course into American airspace.

James Char, a research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, said the conduct of strategic reconnaissance during the spy balloon incident would have been under the purview of the SSF’s Aerospace Systems Department.

“That was one of the roles and responsibilities of the PLASSF,” he said.

It is unclear if the balloon incident contributed to Xi’s decision to disband the SSF.

Wuthnow, of the National Defense University, said the newly created Information Support Force will likely take charge of communications and network defense for the PLA.

“Getting these things right is of huge importance for the PLA in any future conflict, and they have been paying close attention to these functions and probably drawing lessons for their own organization from the war in Ukraine,” he said, referring to Russia’s ongoing invasion of its neighbor.

“So it makes sense that the [Central Military Commission] chairman would want to play a more direct role in that area.”

‘Intelligentized warfare’

The latest shake-up is likely the result of an ongoing review of how the military can better meet the strategic objectives of the ruling Chinese Communist Party, according to Char.

“I suppose the reorganization better reflects the importance the PLA has placed on speeding up the development of intelligentized warfare” brought by a new round of technological and industrial advancement, he said.

The concept of “intelligentized warfare” drew attention in a 2019 Chinese defense white paper that highlighted the military application of cutting-edge

tech such as AI, quantum information, big data and cloud computing.

“The landscape of international military competition is undergoing historic changes. New and high-tech military technologies with information technology as the core is advancing with each passing day, and there’s a prevailing trend to develop long-range precision, intelligent, stealthy or unmanned weaponry and equipment,” the white paper said.

“War is accelerating its evolution in form towards informationized warfare, and intelligitized warfare is on the horizon.”

The creation of the Information Support Force as a new branch directly under the Central Military Commission also underscores the importance of information dominance in modern warfare.

A commentary in the PLA Daily, the Chinese military’s official mouthpiece, described network information technology as “the biggest variable” in enhancing combat capability.

“Modern wars are competitions between systems and structures, where control over information equates to control over the initiative in war,” it said.

The emphasis on information dominance and “intelligitized warfare” also has significant implications for any potential future conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

China’s Communist Party views Taiwan as part of its territory, despite never having controlled it, and has vowed to take control of the island – by force if necessary.

Char said in the event of a Taiwan conflict, the Information Support Force “would likely take over as the tip of the spear in supporting the PLA’s attempts to dominate the information space before Beijing’s adversaries can do so.”

### Xi Jinping unveils newest branch of Chinese military

21 April 2024, [Global Nation](#)



President Xi Jinping unveils on Friday the newest branch in the Chinese military — the Information Support Force of the People’s Liberation Army. Xi conferred the new force’s flag to its commander Lieutenant General Bi Yi and political commissar of the unit General Li Wei in Beijing. XINHUA

President Xi Jinping on Friday unveiled the newest branch of the Chinese military, the Information Support Force of the People’s Liberation Army, calling it a vital power in modern warfare.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, conferred the new force’s flag to its commander Lieutenant General Bi Yi and political commissar of the unit General Li Wei at the force’s establishment ceremony at the CMC headquarters building in Beijing.

The president gave his instructions to the Information Support Force, ordering it to strive to become a powerful and modernized unit. He said that establishing the Information Support Force is a major decision by the CPC Central Committee and the CMC, aiming to build a strong PLA, and a strategic step in establishing a new structure of services and improving the military system with Chinese characteristics.

“This is of profound and far-reaching significance to the modernization of national defense and the armed forces and to the military’s fulfillment of its missions and tasks in the new era,” Xi said. “The Information Support Force is a brand-new strategic branch of the PLA and a key pillar of the integrated development and use of the network information system. It plays an important role and bears great responsibility in promoting the PLA’s high-quality development and the ability to fight and win in modern warfare.”

The president ordered that the new force must be absolutely loyal to the Party. He stressed that the unit must focus on its core task of using information assets to support combat operations. It must maintain information flow, integrate information resources, protect information security and must integrate deeply into the military’s joint operation system.

The commander-in-chief also urged the new force to boost innovation, strengthen coordination and integration among different systems, cooperate with other forces, and bolster the sharing of assets. It must form a network information system which can support modern combat operations and has Chinese characteristics, Xi noted.

According to a decision made by the CMC, the Information Support Force is directly led by the CMC, and the official designation of the Strategic Support Force, which was founded in December 2015 to take charge of space, cyberspace and electronic warfare operations, is canceled.

Meanwhile, the leadership and structures of the PLA Space Force and the PLA Cyberspace Force have been rearranged accordingly, said the CMC.

The announcement also marked the first time China has confirmed the existence of the Space Force and

the Cyberspace Force, which were widely believed to be major parts of the Strategic Support Force.

Senior Colonel Wu Qian, a spokesman for the Defense Ministry, told reporters at a news conference on Friday evening that with the latest overhaul, the PLA now has four services, namely the Ground Force, the Navy, the Air Force and the Rocket Force, and several sub-branches including the Space Force, the Cyberspace Force, the Information Support Force and the Joint Logistic Support Force.

In response to a question about the newly declassified Space Force, Wu said that building the force is of great significance in strengthening the capability to safely travel to outer space, openly and peacefully develop space resources, and enhance governance and crisis management in space.

"China's space policies are clear and plain. We are always committed to the peaceful utilization of space and stand ready to work with all countries with the same commitment to strengthen exchanges, deepen cooperation and contribute to lasting peace and common security in space," the spokesman said.

When asked whether the Cyberspace Force is used for "militarizing the internet", Wu said cybersecurity remains a global challenge and poses a severe threat to China.

"Developing the Cyberspace Force and tools for cybersecurity and defense is important for reinforcing national cyberspace defense, promptly detecting and countering network intrusions and maintaining our cybersovereignty and information security," he said.

### **Xi orders China's biggest military reorganization since 2015**

21 April 2024, [Japan Times](#)

Chinese leader Xi Jinping has ordered what amounts to the biggest reorganization of the nation's military since 2015 in a move that affects the force in charge of capabilities including cyberwarfare.

China will terminate the Strategic Support Force, which was created more than eight years ago to enhance capabilities in space, cyber, political and electronic warfare, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Friday.

Xi is in turn creating a new branch called the Information Support Force. The aerospace and cyber units previously under the Strategic Support Force will now be organizationally parallel to the newly created Information Support Force, the Defense Ministry said in a statement. The aerospace unit will improve China's capability to use space and step up the management of space crises, the ministry said.

The restructuring comes as the world's second-largest economy faces off with the U.S. in a fight for global influence, with cyberwarfare emerging as a key

battleground. The U.S., U.K. and New Zealand accused China last month of sponsoring malicious cyber activity in targeting democratic institutions.

Reiterating the Communist Party's leadership over the army, Xi said that the new force will provide "key support in coordinating the construction and utilization of the cyber information system."

Li Wei, the political commissar from the now-defunct Strategic Support Force, will take that same role with the Information Support Force. He pledged to "resolutely" listen to Xi's instructions. The new commander of the Information Support Force is Bi Yi, state television CCTV reported.

The changes are aimed at better adapting China's military to the "informatization" conditions of modern warfare, said Cao Weidong, a retired senior researcher at the PLA Naval Research Academy. The restructuring will lead to "better deployment" of satellite systems, cyberspace, and when conducting electronic warfare, Cao told reporters on the sidelines of the West Pacific Naval Symposium in Qingdao.

The previous commander of the Strategic Support Force was Ju Qiansheng, whose disappearance had spurred speculation that he was linked to the broader turmoil in China's military leadership that's unfolded over the past year. While Ju has recently resurfaced, state media hasn't made clear his current position.

The latest revamp follows a sweeping purge by Xi of the military establishment last year. U.S. intelligence experts viewed that move as a response to the discovery of widespread corruption in the military, including in the Rocket Force, which manages the country's expanding nuclear arsenal.

Former Defense Minister Li Shangfu was ousted from his role without explanation in October. China named Dong Jun, a navy veteran, as the new defense chief in December.

### **Chinese Ministry of State Security: 'Military Fans' at High Risk of Becoming Espionage Targets**

20 March 2024, [RFA](#)

China's Ministry of State Security has issued another stern warning about the potential national security threats posed by military enthusiasts, or "military fans." The ministry says this group is a high-risk target for espionage, theft of secrets, and leaks involving military matters.

In an article titled "Another Reminder for 'Military Fans'" published earlier this month, the ministry outlined several specific risks pertaining to this community's activities. The article states that military fans could inadvertently "guide" foreign intelligence operations by revealing sensitive military information,

their online military forums and groups could become channels for overseas theft of secrets, and individual military fans could become targets for “screening and enticement” by foreign personnel acting as “insiders.” On March 7th, the ministry’s official WeChat account delved deeper into the risks involved. The WeChat post noted that Chinese military fans obsessively track developments of advanced weapons and equipment, closely following details such as equipment quantities and models, troop locations, and aircraft serial numbers. They establish databases compiling this sensitive information and share it on websites, constantly expanding and refining the available data. “As time goes by, this information will become increasingly rich and professional, to the point of endangering military security,” the Ministry of State Security warned.

This is not the first time that Beijing has raised alarms about the activity of military fans. On December 23rd of 2023, the Ministry cautioned fans against leaking information on construction progress, technical specifications, or deployment details of new military equipment. The Ministry’s communication at that time stated that violations could result in prison sentences of 3 to 7 years. China’s security establishment clearly views information gathering and sharing by these military enthusiasts as a critical risk to be proactively addressed.

### **Xi Jinping tightens grip on China’s military with new information warfare unit**

19 April 2024, [Financial Times](#)

China has established a new information warfare department under the direct command of its top military body as it begins its largest restructuring of the armed forces in more than eight years. The shift of information warfare to the direct command of the Central Military Commission — the top Communist party and state organ that controls the People’s Liberation Army — would hand Chinese leader Xi Jinping even more direct control over the military, analysts said. The Information Support Force will aim to “speed up military modernisation and effectively implement the mission of the people’s armed forces in the new era”, Xi said at a ceremony in Beijing on Friday. It will be removed from the Strategic Support Force, which was set up eight years ago as a new PLA branch combining information, cyber and space warfare departments under Xi’s previous military restructuring, said a statement from the PLA Daily military news service. The space and cyber forces would also be brought under a new command structure, it said, de facto abolishing the Strategic Support Force. Under the SSF, the information forces had been in charge of collecting technical intelligence

and providing intelligence support to regional military chiefs. Joe McReynolds, China security fellow at the Jamestown Foundation, said: “When the SSF was created, they rearranged existing capabilities under a new command structure. We guessed at the time that might be transitional, and that has now come to pass.” Beijing’s efforts to further strengthen the PLA are closely watched as China challenges US dominance in the Indo-Pacific region and wields its growing military power to intimidate various neighbours in territorial disputes. Xi’s last major PLA restructuring in 2015 moved critical functions such as logistics, training and mobilisation directly under the command of the CMC, which he chairs. Combining cyber, information and space forces under the SSF was viewed as an attempt to create similar direct control. But experts on the Chinese military said that leaders had unwound that structure as a result of an incident last year in which a Chinese surveillance balloon was shot down by the US, as well as corruption investigations into generals and a failure to achieve synergies across the different divisions within the SSF. The military leadership has been experimenting with smaller reorganisations in recent years, suggesting that the 2015 reforms were not complete. “The relative success of the functions they moved under the CMC has convinced them that they will have the control they want,” McReynolds said. He added that Beijing was focused on cutting out layers of command and enabling top leaders to speak directly to tactical forces in wartime if needed. Bi Yi, a veteran army general, was appointed commander of the new Information Support Force, and Li Wei named as its political commissar. The latter position wields power equal with the commander as the Communist party seeks to enforce absolute loyalty and ideological correctness in the force, which belongs to the party rather than the state.

### **NASA chief warns of Chinese military presence in space**

17 April 2024, [VOA News](#)



FILE - A Long March-2C rocket, carrying the Einstein Probe satellite, lifts off from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Xichang in China's Sichuan province, Jan. 9, 2024. The head of the U.S. space



*agency said China is using its civilian program to mask military objectives.*

China is bolstering its space capabilities and is using its civilian program to mask its military objectives, the head of the U.S. space agency said Wednesday, warning that Washington must remain vigilant.

"China has made extraordinary strides especially in the last 10 years, but they are very, very secretive," NASA administrator Bill Nelson told lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

"We believe that a lot of their so-called civilian space program is a military program. And I think, in effect, we are in a race," Nelson said.

He said he hoped Beijing would "come to its senses and understand that civilian space is for peaceful uses," but added: "We have not seen that demonstrated by China."

Nelson's comment came as he testified before the House Appropriations Committee on NASA's budget for fiscal 2025.

He said the United States should land on the moon again before China does, as both nations pursue lunar missions, but he expressed concern that were Beijing to arrive first, it could say: "OK, this is our territory, you stay out."

The United States is planning to put astronauts back on the moon in 2026 with its Artemis 3 mission. China says it hopes to send humans to the moon by 2030.

Nelson said he was confident the United States would not lose its "global edge" in space exploration.

"But you got to be realistic," he said. "China has really thrown a lot of money at it and they've got a lot of room in their budget to grow. I think that we just better not let down our guard."

### **China's latest Military Buildup in Tibet: China's Provocation does not end with just Cartographic Aggression**

16 April 2024, [Indian Defence Review](#)

Amidst the thawing snows and the onset of spring in the Himalayan Border Region, the possibility of a military confrontation between India and China looms ominously. Since March, China's expansive military buildup in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Tibetan areas has been disconcerting, marked by a rapid boost in troop size and military logistic infrastructure development.

This includes the upsurge in deploying thousands of newly recruited soldiers and officers from Mainland China into TAR and the Western Theater Command (WTC) as part of 2024 PLA's Spring recruitment drive. Additionally, lately, China has urgently sped up the construction of its military infrastructure projects, notably the recent boost of 417 Key Roadways Projects

for a logistic system based on three-dimensional transportation networks in TAR of Airports, Railway, and Roadway.

China's aggressive move has been interpreted as a response towards India's induction of 10,000 soldiers and the strategic infrastructure upgrade, especially the Sela Tunnel, in the border areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Since 2017, Beijing has renamed a total of 62 different areas in Arunachal Pradesh as an integral part of the territorial jurisdiction of Southern Tibet "Zangnan". Apart from dismissing such actions as a gimmick or illogical, India should study the likely future implications of such actions by China and take pre-emptive steps to dissuade the PLA. The 62 renamed places of sovereign Indian territories as being integral to so-called "South-Tibet" is part of the "Three Warfares" strategy to gradually build up domestic and international opinion of their extraterritorial claims.

The current upsurge in militarization efforts by India has garnered significant attention, as covered by CNN and other foreign media "A high-altitude (Sela Tunnel) is the latest flashpoint in India-China border tensions". It seems that such news does not highlight China's ever-growing and non-stop construction of multiple strategic tunnels, bridges, and roads across the LAC with the like of the latest 417 Key Roadway construction announcement after March, which will fuel further disputes and threaten India's security and sovereignty.

China's proactive role in exacerbating tensions along the borders with India extends beyond territorial renaming. By bolstering its military size and infrastructure development across highly sensitive border areas, China is indicating its potential aim to assert pressure and dominance on India and therefore strategically escalate the border conflict.

Between March 16th and 31st, 2024, the Chinese PLA's WTC initiated a substantial drive to induct newly recruited PLA soldiers, primarily from Mainland China. The newly recruited soldiers during PLA's Spring recruitment of first half of 2024 were mobilized and transported into TAR, and Tibetan areas incorporated in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan Provinces within WTC. Other Tibetan areas, specifically the Dechen (Diqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture also witnessed an influx of newly recruited soldiers.

In addition, China carried out the direct selection and recruitment of officers for the Tibet Military Region (TMR), targeting mainly fresh graduates with science and engineering backgrounds majoring in Hindi language, aircraft design and engineering, aircraft manufacturing engineering, aircraft power engineering, computer science and technology, network engineering and nursing, and other academic majors. The Chinese PLA's recruitment targets depict

China's focus on bolstering military infrastructure construction, cyber operation, and linguistic capabilities, particularly across the LAC.

Assessing Tibetan's presence and participation within the Chinese PLA stationed in TAR

A growing concern among defense analysts in India relates to the increasing number of Tibetans recruitment within the Chinese PLA's forces following the violent 2020 Galwan Clashes.

Major areas within the WTC lie in the territory of the traditional areas of Tibet, which were occupied in the 1950s and subsumed into PRC as TAR (Outer Tibet) and Tibetan areas within Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan Province (Inner Tibet). Although Tibetan traditional areas constitute the largest area within WTC spanning across the whole of the Tibetan Plateau, there are only meager numbers of Tibetan soldiers inside the Chinese PLA.

Recent census data from the China Statistical Yearbook of 2021, recorded a total Tibetan population within the PRC as 7,060,731 people, mainly inhabiting the traditional areas of Tibet, constituting modern-day TAR (Outer Tibet) and Incorporated Tibetan areas (Inner Tibet) absorbed into the four neighboring Chinese provinces. Out of more than 7 million Tibetans, only 7487 Tibetans are recorded as being active servicemen in the PLA, according to China's Seventh National Census in 2020.

Since the Chinese PLA's annexation and its subsequent occupation of Tibet in the 1950s, Tibetans continuously have been at the worst end of systemic repression, leading to a reluctance among Tibetan youth to enlist in the army. The declining number of applicants for military conscription in TAR indicates the lack of support for an army that had stolen and deprived Tibetans of their freedom and sovereignty.

In 2018, there was a total of 6,697 people applying for military conscription from the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Since then, the number of applicants from TAR for military conscription has shown a declining trend, with the decreasing numbers to 5,800 in 2020, declining to 3800 in 2021, and a slight increase to 4400 during 2022, as per local reports. Among the total permanent population of 3,648,100 in TAR as per the Seventh Chinese Census in 2020, there were 443,370 Han Chinese and 66,829 non-Tibetan ethnic Chinese.

Therefore, it is likely that Han Chinese and other ethnic groups may constitute a significant portion of the applicants during military conscription since there is a lack of Tibetan participation.

Even Lhasa, the most populated city in TAR with a total permanent population of 867,891 people in 2020, had only 472 applicants during the spring 2022 military conscription. Not all 475 applicants are necessarily

Tibetan, since Lhasa was recorded as the city with the most Han Chinese populations in 2020.

Out of the total population in Lhasa, there were 233,083 Han-Chinese and 25,953 non-Tibetan ethnic groups permanently settled in the area. Similarly, Zhanda (Zanda) County bordering India's Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand and the closest border county to New Delhi, witnessed only two Tibetan applicants for 2024 spring recruitment out of a total population of 8,454 people.

Contrary to the growing claims of increasing numbers of Tibetans within the PLA, the majority of the soldiers and officers within the Tibet Military Region and other WTC areas are Han Chinese or other non-Tibetan ethnic groups from Mainland China.

Recent Strategic Infrastructure Expansion: Massive 417 Key Roadway Construction Projects underway

The uptick in the deployment of the newly recruited soldiers in the TAR is supplemented by an intense infrastructural development plan intended to strengthen the Chinese PLA's logistical and transportation capabilities. The recent unveiling of 417 Key roadway construction projects in TAR is strategically designed to bolster China's military prowess, particularly in reaction to the construction of the Sela Tunnel near Eastern LAC Sectors by India.

On March 22, the Transportation Department of the TAR announced an extensive plan of 417 roadway construction projects scheduled for completion within this year.

As per the official announcement, the key projects targeting TAR border areas of 2024 included:

- G4218 Lhasa to Shigatse Airport section construction project.
- G109 Golmud to Nagqu section quality improvement project.
- Implementation of 281 administrative village access projects and the addition of 175 administrative villages to have access to hardened roads.
- Major quality improvement projects of the G318 Highway including reconstruction of the Wada (Lengqu River) Section.
- To start all projects within the "14th Five-Year Plan"

In addition to the 417 Roadway construction projects, China has announced two other strategic infrastructure plans in recent months, which further significantly boost their transportation logistic network and military readiness. On February 1, the "Key Construction Project Plan for Region in 2024" issued by TAR's Development and Reform Commission, unveiled 187 Key construction projects with a planned investment of 151.8 Billion Yuan. Earlier on January 11, TAR's government announced an 80 billion yuan

(\$11.2 billion) investment plan to boost key infrastructure such as airports, railways, and highways in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

Within the 80 Billion Yuan Investment, China executed three major roadway projects mainly on the India-china border, comprising the construction of the Metok (Medog) to Chayu (Zayu) section of National Highway G219, ;an upgrade and renovation of National Highway G318, ; and the opening of the entire Lhasa-Shigatse (Lashi) Expressway to traffic was proclaimed.

Concurrently, the prefectural level administration across TAR has also intensified infrastructure construction projects in recent months. For instance, in Ali Prefecture, bordering Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand State, 340 Key Construction Projects for 2024 with a 72.424 Billion Yuan total investment were recently announced.

According to the TAR’s governmental work report of 2024, the region’s border infrastructure, especially the road transportation network has undergone major upgrades, with 97% of Border Towns and 87% of Xiaokang Border Villages now having access to hardened roads. Earlier reports highlighted that by the end of 2023, a total of 123,00 Kilometers of roadway had been opened for traffic.

This massive roadway project marks a major progression towards realizing an extensive three-dimensional transportation network, with the nexus of Roadways, Railways, and Airports. Thereby linking every remote and border area of TAR with Mainland China and neighboring countries such as Nepal and Bhutan. This strategic design comes under the directives outlined in “The 14th Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Outline of the plan and long-term goals for 2035” issued on January 24, 2021. As reiterated by Chinese officials, the main objective of the three-dimensional transportation network in TAR is to establish a modern military logistic system designed to ensure long-term stability and peace in the region.

**Conclusion**

The recent clashes between India and China along LAC borders and the PLA Navy presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), along with their strategic competition for geopolitical influence over South Asia, have increased the specter of a conflict between the two major powers in Asia.

China’s stern warning to India against escalating border tensions with the induction of 10,000 soldiers and strategic Sela Tunnel construction across the LAC constitutes a duplicity and hypocrisy in its behaviour. Rather than de-escalating border tensions, China’s recent actions suggest the opposite. Its aggression against India does not end with the remaining areas of

the sovereign Indian territories. Under the guise of disengagement and de-escalation, Beijing is rapidly bolstering its military power and strategic build-up in TAR with the recent deployment of fresh PLA recruits into TAR and ramping up its logistic infrastructures.

**Highest Altitude Airport in the World 2024, List of Top-10**

12 April 2024, [Current Affairs](#)

As air travel continues to connect the world, airports play a crucial role in facilitating global mobility. However, some airports operate under extreme conditions, situated at breathtaking altitudes where thin air and challenging weather conditions pose unique challenges for pilots and engineers alike. In this article, we delve into the realm of high-altitude aviation to explore the top ten highest altitude airports in the world as of 2024.

**Highest Altitude Airport in the World 2024**

As of 2024, Daocheng Yading Airport (DCY) in China remains the world’s highest-altitude airport, situated at 4,411m elevation. It serves as the vital link to the stunning Yading Nature Reserve, just 6km away. With a single runway stretching 4,200m long and 45m wide, and a compact 5,000m<sup>2</sup> terminal, the airport operates under special protocols due to its extreme altitude. Aircraft adhere to reduced speeds during takeoff and landing, while passengers are encouraged to acclimate to the high altitude beforehand.

*Top-10 Highest Altitude Airports in the World By 2024*

Highest Altitude Airports in the World By 2024			
Rank	Airport	Location	Altitude (in ft.)
1.	Daocheng Yading	China	14,472
2.	Bangda	Tibet, China	14,219
3.	Kangding	China	14,042
4.	Ngari Gunsa	China	14,022
5.	Ei Alto International Airport	Bolivia	13,356
6.	Captain Nicolas Rojas International Airport	Bolivia	12,923
7.	Yushu Batang Airport	China	12,815

8.	Inca Manco Capac International Airport	Peru	12,552
9.	Shigatse Peace Airport	China	12,402
10.	Syanboche Airport	Nepal	12,402

**World’s Highest Airport – Daocheng Yading Airport**

Location: China

Altitude: 14,472 feet

Since 2013, Daocheng Yading Airport in China has claimed the title of the highest airport globally, standing at an altitude of 4411 meters above sea level. Its runway stretches 4,200 meters long and 45 meters wide, while the terminal covers 5000 square meters, notable for its UFO-like design. This airport serves as a remarkable feat of engineering amidst the challenging high-altitude terrain of the Tibetan Plateau.

**Second Highest Altitude Airport of the World – Bangda Airport**

Location: China

Altitude: 14,219 feet

The second-highest airport globally is Bangda Airport, located in Qamdo, Tibet, at an elevation of 4,334 meters above sea level. Renowned for its extraordinary altitude, it features the world’s longest publicly used paved runway, stretching 5,500 meters. This extensive runway is vital to accommodate large aircraft, compensating for reduced engine and aircraft performance during takeoff and landing at such extreme altitudes.

**Third Highest Airport in the World – Kangding Airport**

Location: China

Altitude: 14,042 feet

The third-highest airport globally is Kangding Airport in China, nestled in the western province of Sichuan. Situated at 4,280 meters above sea level, it stands as a testament to engineering at extreme altitudes. Kangding Airport serves as a crucial gateway to the region, facilitating air travel amidst challenging mountainous terrain. Its strategic location aids in connecting travelers to the picturesque landscapes of the Tibetan Plateau.

**Chinese military researchers zero in on AI-driven navy, space combat to ‘win future wars’**

10 April 2024, [South China Morning Post](#)

Study Times, a key Communist Party paper, publishes series by PLA experts on emerging weapons technology to take strategic high ground Monday’s articles come as Xi Jinping underlines need to ‘boldly innovate’ during country’s ‘military struggle’ Researchers in China’s armed forces have prioritised key areas of military technologies, including AI-driven

naval warfare and aerospace combat capabilities, expanding on President Xi Jinping calls for “bold innovations” in advanced technology.

In a series devoted to Xi’s concept of developing “new quality combat power”, Study Times, a publication under the Central Party School of China’s Communist Party, published articles on Monday by various People’s Liberation Army (PLA) researchers stressing that such technologies had become the strategic high ground in military dominance and were essential to winning on future battlefields.

Xi has repeatedly pushed the PLA to develop hi-tech and advanced capabilities to win a modern war. In a meeting in March he urged officials to “boldly innovate and explore new types of combat force construction and applications, and liberate and develop new quality combat power”.

The authors said the role of artificial intelligence was a priority for “new combat forces”, and that it was a “clear trend” that AI-powered military systems would be a “key variable in changing the rules of war”.

The authors discussed how AI technology was changing the nature of military command and decision-making, saying it could process and analyse large amounts of data to help make faster decisions, and in some cases, independently make complex tactical decisions and operations. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and unmanned drone boats were also becoming more prevalent, they said.

After Xi last month urged forces to prepare “for the military struggle at sea”, the articles discussed how “unmanned intelligent combat will deeply change the deployments of naval forces, prompting changes in battle concepts and accelerating the evolution of combat”.The authors also explored how massive drone networks could assess situational awareness during sea battles, process data with cloud computing, and use advanced algorithms to form adaptive command, assault and logistic chains. AI-controlled drones could also be used for tasks such as air refuelling, communications relays, electronic countermeasures for reconnaissance and surveillance, swarm bombing and decoy deployment, they said.The flexibility and cost-effectiveness of AI-integrated drones would upend traditional naval theories, one researcher wrote, and “new methods of warfare at sea, such as unmanned attrition warfare and unmanned guerrilla warfare, will gain new asymmetric advantages”.In another article, researchers focused on the expansion of “new military realms”, in which “electromagnetic space, cyberspace and aerospace” would become the “new frontiers of military struggle”.“History has proved that whoever can effectively grasp and use the right to control a certain space through the development of new combat forces will gain a great

advantage in future military competitions,” the article said.

The researchers also singled out circumstances that they thought would compel China’s space combat force to modernise, and warned that the PLA must avoid situations “in which core technologies are controlled by others as soon as possible”.

“We must have a deep understanding of the important role of emerging tech and new combat forces in modern warfare, be aware of new fields of technology, and understand the potential of new combat capabilities to see the future battlefield clearly and win future wars,” they said.

### Longest Runway In The World: A Brief Guide To China's Rikaze Peace Airport

07 April 2024, [Simple Flying](#)



Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) is one of the highest airports and has the world's longest runway. Higher altitude airports in China and Bolivia pose challenges due to thin air and low oxygen levels. Airbus A319 aircrafts are used for high-elevation airports, equipped with special features for operations.



First opened as a purely military facility in 1973, Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) became a dual-use military and civilian airport in 2010 following a 532 million yuan expansion. Serving Shigatse in the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) is one of the highest elevations in the world at 12,408 feet above sea level.

While it is not the world's highest airport, it is tied with Ulyanovsk Vostochny Airport (ULY) in Russia for having the world's longest runway at 16,000 feet long.

#### Higher altitude airports are:

- Daocheng Yading Airport (DCY) in China is 14,566 feet above sea level.

- Changdu Bangda Airport (BPX) in China is 14,219 feet above sea level.

#### Other high altitude airports can be found in South America

Before the massive building boom in China, the world's highest runways were in South America and included the following airports:

- El Alto International Airport (LPB) in Bolivia is 13,326 feet above sea level.
- Captain Nicolas Rojas Airport (POI) in Bolivia is 12,913 feet above sea level.

#### Why do high-elevation airports need long runways?

At 5,400 feet above sea level, Denver International Airport (DEN) in Colorado has long posed challenges to pilots, but things start to deteriorate further once you get above 6,500 feet. Airports above this height are more challenging due to lower air density and lower levels of oxygen. Compared to sea level, airports at high elevations have thinner air, which affects how aircraft perform, because the air is less dense. When it flows over the wings, it produces less lift. Likewise, less oxygen in the air reduces the amount of thrust from the engines. These two factors combined force pilots to carefully calculate takeoff and landing distances along with the plane's rate of climb. Another factor that often comes into play is that high-altitude airports have unpredictable weather that changes rapidly, as is the case at Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) in Tibet.

The weather at Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ)

The climate at Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) consists of a dry monsoon-influenced continental type. The summers are hot and humid due to the East Asian monsoons, while the winters are cold, dry, and windy due to the sizable Siberian anticyclone. The area is often subjected to sand storms blowing across the Mongolian steppe from the Gobi Desert during the spring. The autumn, just like spring, is relatively short and dry with very little rain. Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) is 26.7 miles from Tibet's second-largest city, Shigatse, in Jiangdang Township. In 2020, Xigazê, or Rikaze as it is called in Tibetan, had a population of 798,153. According to the aviation flight tracking website, Flightradar24 Peace Airport (RKZ) has no international flights but does serve three airports in China, which are:

- Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport (CTU) has ten flights per week operated by Tibet Airlines using Airbus A319 aircraft.
- Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport (CKG) has three flights per week by West Air (China) using Airbus A319 aircraft.
- Xi'an Xianyang International Airport (XIY) has six flights per week by China Eastern Airlines using Airbus A319 aircraft.

**Ulyanovsk Vostochny Airport (ULY) is used by large cargo planes**

At only 253 above the sea, Ulyanovsk Vostochny Airport (ULY) in Ulyanovsk Oblast in Russia has a long runway because it is a base for large load cargo operator Volga-Dnepr Airlines.

Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ) has a 48,000 square feet terminal building and added a second 9,843-foot runway, which is used by the People's Republic of China military to test its high-altitude long-endurance Guizhou WZ-7 Soaring Dragon unmanned aerial reconnaissance drones.

#### **Why airlines use the Airbus A319 to fly to Rikaze Peace Airport (RKZ)**

The Airbus A319 is one of the few aircraft certified for high-altitude airport operation by the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). When operating from high-elevation airports, there are two main elements that come into play: engine thrust and passenger oxygen requirements.

Because of the air density at high elevations, Airbus has fitted some A319s with a thrust bump that increases the takeoff/go-around (TOGA) thrust by 10%. The thrust bump buttons are activated by pushing two red buttons on the back of the thrust levers.

For higher altitude airports, the oxygen mask drop levels and a greater passenger oxygen capacity needs to be changed. The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) requires all planes using high-altitude airports to carry a 55-minute supply of oxygen.

The usual amount of oxygen is 15 minutes, which is more than enough time for pilots to take the aircraft to lower levels. When flying over high mountainous terrain in Tibet, a pilot would need more time to get the aircraft to a flight level where oxygen was not needed.

#### **About Tibet Airlines**

Headquartered in the Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region, Tibet Airlines commenced flights on July 26, 2011. Its inaugural route was from Lhasa Gonggar Airport (LXA) to Ngari Gunsar Airport (NGQ). Later in the same year, Tibet began to fly direct flights between Lhasa, Beijing, and Shanghai. According to the aviation data and statistics website, ch-aviation Tibet Airlines serves 55 domestic destinations within China using a fleet of 45 aircraft.

#### **The aircraft in the Tibet Airlines fleet are**

- 27 x Airbus A319-100s
- 7 x Airbus A319-100Ns with 13 to be delivered
- 6 x Airbus A320-200s
- 5 X A330-200s

#### **China set to become the world's largest air force, top US military official warns**

April 1, 2024

<https://interestingengineering.com/military/china-worlds-largest-air-force>

Navy Adm. John Aquilino characterized the modernization of China's military as "the biggest threat since World War 2."

China is set to become the world's largest air force and could replace the United States, a top US military official warned. According to Navy Adm. John Aquilino, head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, China's military modernization is "the biggest threat since World War 2."

"What we all have to understand is we haven't faced a threat like this since World War 2. The largest military, and again as Senator Wicker said, the world's largest Navy, soon to be the world's largest Air Force. So, the magnitude, scope and scale of this security challenge cannot be understated," Aquilino said in a testimony on Capitol Hill on March 21.

"Our adversaries have become increasingly aggressive and emboldened. The PRC' unprecedented military buildup and campaign of course of actions destabilize the region and they challenge our values and the institutions that support a free and open Indo-Pacific," he added. In his last testimony as the Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), Aquilino noted that PLA's aviation has undergone a significant transformation since 2021. "Combined, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and PLAN Aviation constitute the largest aviation force in the Indo Pacific. Over half of the PLA's operational fighter force is 4th and 5th generation, enabling longer-range A2/AD and counter-air operations across the western Pacific Ocean. The PLA is also developing a stealth bomber that can cover the Second Island Chain and the Western Pacific," he wrote in a March 18 statement.

#### **Catching up with the US economically and technologically**

Furthermore, the military official also pointed out that the US can't just spend money to stay ahead because "China is catching up economically and technologically."

"While modernization of the force and the development of new concepts are essential to our ability to deter, we need to move at the speed and pace required to address the rapidly evolving security environment," he wrote.

In a 2023 assessment of Chinese military capabilities, the Pentagon highlighted that when considering the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and Navy together, they possess over 3,150 aircraft excluding trainer versions and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), of which approximately 2,400 are combat aircraft, including fighters, strategic bombers, tactical bombers, multi-mission tactical, and attack aircraft. "The PLAAF is rapidly catching up to Western air forces. The PLAAF continues to modernize with the

delivery of domestically built aircraft and a wide range of UASs,” reads a key takeaway from the report. Meanwhile, the US Air Force, though currently at its smallest size in recent years, maintains approximately 4,000 aircraft that are not trainers or drones. Moreover, additional aircraft are operated by the Navy, Marine Corps, and Army, collectively numbering several thousand more, *The EurAsian Times* reported.

### **China set to become the world’s largest air force, top US military official warns**

01 April 2024, Bojan Stojkovski, [Interesting Engineering](#)

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Navy Adm. John Aquilino characterized the modernization of China’s military as “the biggest threat since World War 2.”

China is set to become the world’s largest air force and could replace the United States, a top US military official warned. According to Navy Adm. John Aquilino, head of the US Indo-Pacific Command, China’s military modernization is “the biggest threat since World War 2.”

“What we all have to understand is we haven’t faced a threat like this since World War 2. The largest military, and again as Senator Wicker said, the world’s largest Navy, soon to be the world’s largest Air Force. So, the magnitude, scope and scale of this security challenge cannot be understated,” Aquilino said in a testimony on Capitol Hill on March 21.

“Our adversaries have become increasingly aggressive and emboldened. The PRC’ unprecedented military buildup and campaign of course of actions destabilize the region and they challenge our values and the institutions that support a free and open Indo-Pacific,” he added. In his last testimony as the Commander of US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), Aquilino noted that PLA’s aviation has undergone a significant transformation since 2021. “Combined, the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) and PLAN Aviation constitute the largest aviation force in the Indo Pacific. Over half of the PLA’s operational fighter force is 4th and 5th generation, enabling longer-range A2/AD and counter-air operations across the western Pacific Ocean. The PLA is also developing a stealth bomber that can cover the Second Island Chain and the Western Pacific,” he wrote in a March 18 statement.

### **Catching up with the US economically and technologically**

Furthermore, the military official also pointed out that the US can’t just spend money to stay ahead because “China is catching up economically and technologically.”

“While modernization of the force and the development of new concepts are essential to our ability to deter, we need to move at the speed and pace required to address the rapidly evolving security environment,” he wrote.

In a 2023 assessment of Chinese military capabilities, the Pentagon highlighted that when considering the People’s Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) and Navy together, they possess over 3,150 aircraft excluding trainer versions and unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), of which approximately 2,400 are combat aircraft, including fighters, strategic bombers, tactical bombers, multi-mission tactical, and attack aircraft. “The PLAAF is rapidly catching up to Western air forces. The PLAAF continues to modernize with the delivery of domestically built aircraft and a wide range of UASs,” reads a key takeaway from the report. Meanwhile, the US Air Force, though currently at its smallest size in recent years, maintains approximately 4,000 aircraft that are not trainers or drones. Moreover, additional aircraft are operated by the Navy, Marine Corps, and Army, collectively numbering several thousand more, *The EurAsian Times* reported.

## CHINA IN THE REGION

### China - Bhutan

#### New township reported coming up in Lhokha in China's Tibet-border build-up

April 29, 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

China is strengthening infrastructure close to the line of actual control (LAC) in occupied Tibet, with a major construction project taking place for a new township in Shannan (Tibetan: Lhokha), in south-eastern Tibet, reported the *timesnownews.com* Apr 28.

A new project is coming up in Luobusha (Tibetan: Lhunpo Zhol Township in Nagartse County) in Shannan Prefecture, a sparsely-populated part of Tibet, with less than four lakh people living in an area of about 80,000 sq km. Importantly, it is about 125 km from the LAC, roughly north of Arunachal Pradesh, the report said.

The housing project is reported to involve the construction of 164 houses to be begun next month to be ready by the end of next year. The report saw this as more evidence of China's increased emphasis on infrastructure build-up close to the LAC. A housing project could of course be for civilians and if necessary, for soldiers, it said.

The report also said that with the onset of spring, work on military infrastructure and training had begun in earnest. These were stated to include:

- The 84th aviation brigade was involved in an exercise involving the Z-19 and Z-18 helicopters.
  - The 84th air defence regiment was involved in missile firing in the Aksai Chin area
  - The 99th Air Brigade participated in flight training of the J-16 aircraft, a fighter similar to the Indian Air Force's Sukhoi-30. The Chinese air force began using it about ten years ago and is one of its frontline fighters.
- Besides, a new 4-km road track was reported to be under construction in the Shaksgam area, which could become "pucca" in the future and may be used to link up with a labour camp in the area.

Reports have also been cited as saying infrastructure in Tashigang (Zhaaxigang), east of Ladakh, in western Tibet, was being upgraded. Located close to Tashigang is Shiquanhe (Tibetan: Sengge Khabab, the main town and administrative seat of Ngari Prefecture); here too, the upgradation of military infrastructure was reported to be evident.

Meanwhile, new Chinese dual-use 'Xiaokang' border villages are also regularly being built and older ones being "populated" along the disputed stretches of the LAC, especially in the eastern sector, to reinforce PLA positions as well as lay claim to territory, reported the *timesofindia.com* Apr 29.

Previous reports have noted that China has been building as many as 628 such border defence villages



to fortify the borders of occupied Tibet with India and Bhutan over the last few years.

“All this clearly indicates PLA will continue to permanently station troops in forward locations along the LAC, even if eventually there is some sort of disengagement at the two major persisting face-off sites at Depsang and Demchok in eastern Ladakh,” the report quoted an unnamed Indian source as saying. There are currently 50,000 to 60,000 PLA troops with heavy weaponry forward deployed in the western (Ladakh) and central sectors (Uttarakhand, Himachal) as well as 90,000 soldiers in the eastern one (Sikkim, Arunachal), the report noted.

### Chinese academic warns Bhutan’s India-bonhomie is inimical to Tibet-border talks

April 28 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The heightened level of bonhomie seen in India-Bhutan relations in recent times has prompted a Chinese academic to warn that it could have “obvious and direct” impacts on China’s efforts to resolve its long-running occupied-Tibet border dispute with the Himalayan kingdom. During his visit to Bhutan last week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi reaffirmed a partnership that “is not limited to land and water”. He doubled India’s Five-Year Plan assistance to Bhutan to more than \$1 billion; was hosted a private dinner by King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck at his Lingkana Palace; and became the first foreigner to be honoured with the Order of the Druk Gyalpo, or Dragon King, Bhutan’s most prestigious civilian award.

Modi’s Mar 22-23 trip came just a week after Bhutan’s Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay, newly elected in Jan 2024, held talks in Delhi with top Indian leaders.

Tshering Tobgay’s predecessor Lotay Tshering was seen as being overly anxious to settle the Tibet-border dispute with China, which likely involves land swaps that would gravely compromise India’s security concerns, although he sought to allay any such concern.

Anyhow, Lotay Tshering made it clear that the border dispute could be settled soon – in the next two or so rounds of talks between the two sides – which was seen as having given rise to misgivings in New Delhi. But in light of recent developments, Lin Minwang, deputy director of the Centre for South Asian Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, has said the impact on Chinese-Bhutan border talks could be “obvious and direct”. “We have seen some momentum since 2020 and the negotiations have achieved significant progress,” the *scmp.com* Mar 29 quoted Lin as saying. “The two sides are (a)waiting for an opportunity of breakthrough but now I think there could be some changes.”

But it has never been clear how far the border negotiations had advanced since neither Beijing nor Thimphu disclosed details. Nevertheless, the report noted that in an interview with *The Hindu* last year, then-Bhutanese prime minister Lotay Tshering – considered a China-friendly figure – had said that the two countries were “inching towards the completion” of a three-step road map on boundary delineation. A land swap involving the Bhutan-controlled Doklam area was stated to be among the proposals, although Bhutan made it clear that any such talks should necessarily involve India as an interested party.

China first proposed a “package deal” in 1996 to trade Jakarlung and Pasamlung for a smaller tract of disputed area around Doklam, Sinchulumpa and Gieu, but Bhutan backed off. In 1998, the two sides instead signed an agreement to pause negotiations, pending further talks, the report noted.

Reflecting Beijing’s thinking and hope, Lin has said the territorial disputes between China and Bhutan were “not that big in principle”.

“The core issue is if Bhutan has made up its mind to resolve the disputes – and if it is willing to defy India.” Despite Bhutan’s assurances, India is seen as being deeply wary of any land swap, which would give China a strategic advantage in the Doklam plateau. The plateau is close to the Siliguri Corridor a strip of land that is around 20km (14 miles) wide at its narrowest point that connects India’s eight northeastern states as well as a part of West Bengal to the rest of the country. Such a swap could expand India’s vulnerabilities to the Chinese in occupied Tibet, with the two Asian powers already at loggerheads over their disputed Himalayan borders stretching over more than three thousand kilometres.

After comments by Lotay Tshering (prime minister from 2013 to 2018 on a possible land swap with Beijing, there were discussions in India about whether Thimphu was struggling to reach a deal without Delhi’s backing; and the former prime minister had to clarify that there was no change in position by Bhutan, the report said.

In broader terms, while India’s relation with China has remained soured since the 2020 violent border clashes along the Ladakh border, the latter has steadily pushed for closer ties with other South Asian nations, including Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal, hosting their leaders in Beijing and financing a number of infrastructure projects in the region

## China - Hong Kong

### China says Hong Kong must 'tightly hold' national security line to safeguard development

15 April 2024, [Reuters](#)

China's top official on Hong Kong affairs said the city should "tightly hold" onto the bottom line of national security to safeguard development, in a speech coming weeks after the enactment of sweeping new security laws.

"To move towards governance and prosperity, we need to tightly hold onto the bottom line of national security in order to safeguard the high quality development of Hong Kong," said the director of Beijing's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, Xia Baolong, in a speech to mark an annual national security day.

Hong Kong in March enacted a new national security law, also known as article 23, that updates or introduces new laws to prohibit treason, sabotage, sedition, the theft of state secrets and espionage, with jail terms of up to life imprisonment.

Xia, however, sought to emphasise that the law posed no threat to investors, at a time when the city has faced Western criticism of a protracted crackdown on dissent, and has struggled economically and financially.

"For the general public of Hong Kong and foreign investors, this law is the protector of their rights, freedoms, property and investment," Xia said.

"Investors from all over the world can come to Hong Kong to invest in new businesses bravely and without concerns," he added. "Hong Kong remains the best place in the world to do business and make money and achieve your dreams."

Some foreign governments including the United States and Britain, however, have criticised the new law as fresh tool for authorities to clamp down on dissent. The legislation adds to another national security law China directly imposed on Hong Kong in 2020 in response to mass pro-democracy protests.

Beijing, however, says the laws are necessary to safeguard the city's stability and prosperity.

The U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong said on Saturday that visitors to the city should "exercise increased caution" with the State Department updating its travel advisory

recently, saying people needed to "exercise a high degree of caution in Hong Kong due to the risk of arbitrary enforcement of local laws".

The security laws have so far been used to jail scores of leading Hong Kong democrats including Joshua Wong, while liberal media outlets and civil society groups have been shut down.

More than 290 people have been arrested under the Beijing imposed national security law so far. Of these, 174 people and five companies have been charged, including prominent China critic and businessman Jimmy Lai -- who is currently on trial and could face life imprisonment.

Reporting by Jessie Pang, James Pomfret and Joyce Zhou; Writing by James Pomfret; Editing by Michael Perry

## China - Nepal

### Nepal Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha visits Tibet; calls for opening 14 traditional border points with China

31 March 2024, [PTI](#)

A press release said that Mr. Shrestha, during the meeting, reiterated the need for reopening of traditional border points.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha also underscored the importance of exporting products from Nepal during a meeting with Wang Junzheng, secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of China.

Mr. Shrestha, who is on his first visit to China after taking over office earlier in the month, was in Lhasa on Friday as part of his trip from March 25 to April 1 when he also urged the Chinese side for its cooperation to address issues facing the residents along the Nepal-China borders. A press release from the Consulate General of Nepal in Lhasa said that Mr. Shrestha, during the meeting, reiterated the need for reopening of traditional border points for the promotion of trade and commerce as well as facilitating the movement of people.

He sought cooperation to make arrangements for the use of pastureland along the bordering areas, to provide entry passes for Nepali containers and electrification in Nepal's highlands, according to the MyRepublica news portal. He recalled an agreement to resume 14 Nepal-China traditional transits during his meeting with Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi in Beijing two days ago and expected the facilitating role on behalf of Tibet's administration to implement the understanding.

Mr. Shrestha also called on the Chinese side to make provisions for resuming the Kathmandu-Lhasa bus service, the report said. He also underscored the importance of exporting products, including Haylage, cooked buffalo meat, and medicinal herbs among others to further strengthen economic cooperation. Haylage is a type of nutritious animal feed.

“The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs further expressed the need to cooperate in the areas of infrastructure and connectivity including the transmission lines to further strengthen the bilateral ties,” The Kathmandu Post newspaper reported, quoting the statement. The two leaders also discussed matters relating to expanding socio-economic cooperation, enhancing understanding and goodwill through high-level exchanges, consolidating the ongoing cooperation and exploring new areas of cooperation.

“Both the leaders discussed matters of mutual interest,” reiterated a post on X along with a photo by Nepal’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs late on Friday night after the meeting.

Earlier on March 26, the strategic partnership between the two countries was discussed during Shrestha’s meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang where China has also urged the new dispensation in Nepal to finalise the implementation plan for its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects that have struggled to make any headway due to continuous political changes in the Himalayan nation. Posting about the meeting on social media platform X, Ambassador Chen Song, the Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, said: “The two sides agreed to reopen 14 traditional border trade points immediately, strengthen practical cooperation between two counties in such fields as trade, investment, tourism, and advance the bilateral relations to a new height.” Shrestha is also expected to visit the holy pilgrimage site of Kailash Mansarovar in Tibet during his visit, it was announced earlier last week.

### **China exempts regular visa fee for Nepali travellers**

28 April 2024, [Kathmandu Post](#)

China has announced exempting visa fees for Nepali travellers with effect from May 1.

In order to promote the friendship and further facilitate the personnel exchange between China and Nepal, visa fees will not be charged from May 1, the Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu said in a statement on Sunday.

The exemption will apply to regular visa processing. However, express fees and service fees will be charged, according to the embassy.

Nepal had been requesting the northern neighbour to exempt visa fees for a long time. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha during his visit to China last month had requested the Chinese authorities to exempt visa fees. Nepal has been waiving visa fees for Chinese nationals since 2016 and has been looking for reciprocal treatment from China.

### **Nepal-China economic relations high as Himalayas: Minister Bhandari**

29 April 2024, [KhabarHub](#)

Minister for Industry, Commerce and Supplies, Damodar Bhandari, has said the trade relations between Nepal and Tibet, the autonomous region of China, will find a new height in the days to come.

In his address to an opening of the 17th Nepal China (Tibet) Economic and Trade Fair organized by the Trade and Export Promotion Center at Bhrikutmandap today, the Minister said this.

He acknowledged China as a longstanding trade partner for Nepal. The trade and economic relations and cultural ties between Nepal and China are as towering as the Himalaya.”

The high terrains and challenging topography have never hindered the trade relations between Nepal and China, he said, adding that “ Our ancestors utilized such deemed challenges as opportunities to promote the trans-Himalaya trade relations when the means of modern transports were not available.”

He said Nepal and China always treat and recognize themselves as friends of happiness and sadness, adding that China’s stability, unity, and prosperity are always the wish of Nepal.

“Nepal is always committed to a One-China policy and I utilize this moment to reiterate Nepal’s commitments by heart, words, and actions to its unity and integrity,” the Minister said.

He expressed his hope that an escalating railway connectivity and economic boom in China will cross the Himalayas in the future. He also expected the support of China to reduce the increasing trade deficit of Nepal with the northern neighbour.

Expressing that the Fair will be an important means to promote trade between the two countries, he said, “I hope that this kind of trade fair will also help to increase trade between our two neighboring countries and will be beneficial for the business community to find new buyers, new markets and new business destinations.”

Deputy Head of the People’s Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Lan Fuquan, emphasized the trade relations between Nepal and Tibet. He suggested that businessmen of the two countries cooperate in import and export by establishing good business relations.

Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce Dinesh Kumar Ghimire said that trade relations between the two countries will accelerate if exports can be managed. He urged Chinese investors to establish industries here to produce export goods to reduce Nepal’s trade deficit with China.

Executive Director of Trade and Export Promotion Center, Sharad Bikram Rana said earlier that according

to the Memorandum of Understanding between Nepal and China (Tibet) dated 1990, the Fair is being held alternately with the Nepal Tibet Economic and Trade Fair with the aim of further expanding economic and trade relations between Nepal and China (Tibet). He expressed his belief that Nepali exporters will use this Fair as an important opportunity to export their goods to China through the concessional system of zero customs rate and will have fruitful business with the business community in Tibet to promote their business.

The Fair, which started today, will continue till May 4. There are 50 Chinese and 15 Nepali business stalls in the fair.

About 40 types of exportable goods exported from Nepal to China are kept in the Nepali stalls.

### **Nepal and China sign two agreements in the presence of Finance Minister Pun**

26 April 2024, [My Republica](#)



Nepal and China have signed two agreements focused on human resources development and the improved bone marrow transplantation service.

These two important agreements were signed in the presence of Finance Minister Barshaman Pun during a ceremony at the Ministry of Finance.

One agreement related to human resources development cooperation for global development initiatives, was signed by Finance Secretary Madhu Kumar Marasini and Chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) Luo Zhaohui on behalf of their respective governments.

Another agreement focused on bone marrow transplant services was signed by Health Secretary Dr Roshan Pokharel and Luo Zhaohui of the CIDCA.

The CIDCA has been working on the formulation of China's foreign aid strategy standards related policy and planning and foreign aid reform agenda.

China had expressed commitment to provide support to initiate bone marrow transplant service in Nepal during Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to China in September 2023.

According to the agreement, China will provide financial assistance to BP Koirala Memorial Cancer Hospital in operating bone marrow transplant services.

Speaking on the occasion, Finance Minister Pun expressed gratitude to China for its ongoing support in Nepal's development. He anticipated further cooperation from China in the days ahead.

Minister Pun noted that Nepal and China have a deep, diverse and sustainable relationship as both the countries respect each other's development aspirations and sensitivity.

Finance Minister Pun laid emphasis on the need of implementing the remaining bilateral agreements signed during high-level visits between the two countries. Stating that they are now on the eve of the Third International Investment Summit, he expressed confidence that Nepal will get the commitment of significant Chinese investment during the summit.

Similarly, CIDCA's Luo Zhaohui, who led the Chinese delegation, stated that China values its friendship with Nepal and remains committed to supporting Nepal's development endeavors. He expressed commitment to implement every issue of agreements signed during the Nepal visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping, and Prime Minister Dahal's China visit.

Stating that they are now in Nepal in the context of the Third Nepal Investment Summit, Luo expressed his commitment to increase Chinese investment in Nepal during the summit.

### **Nepal-China Aid Project meeting held in Lhasa**

25 April 2024, [KhabarHub](#)

The first meeting of the Nepal-China Aid Project has been held in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet.

The Consulate General of Nepal in Lhasa said that in the meeting held on Wednesday, the focus was on the aid project to be conducted in Nepal.

In the meeting, both sides discussed forming a project coordination mechanism, choosing the format of projects, implementation and monitoring.

Both sides have agreed to hold two meetings in the middle of this year and to review the project implementation at the end.

In the meeting, both sides also agreed to increase cooperation in improving the living standards of the people of Nepal bordering Tibet, said the Consulate General.

In the meeting, the Nepali side was led by Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Kamal Prasad Bhattarai, while the Chinese side was led by a senior official of the Foreign Affairs Office of Tibet.

The next meeting will be held next month at a time convenient for both parties.

### **China-Nepal military relations: Risks and opportunities for India**

20 April 2024, [ORF Online](#)

On 9 March 2024, a Chinese military delegation headed by Major General Zhang Baoqun visited Nepal. They toured Nepalese military institutions and held discussions with Nepalese Army Chief Prabhu Ram Sharma on various proposals. The military delegation's arrival closely trailed a political delegation led by Sun Haiyan, Deputy Head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Liaison Department, which made its way to Kathmandu in January 2024. The consecutive visits, coupled with the existing political and military relations between China and Nepal, present a complex scenario.

The military delegation's arrival closely trailed a political delegation led by Sun Haiyan, Deputy Head of the Chinese Communist Party's International Liaison Department, which made its way to Kathmandu in January 2024.

These visits and the public statements of Chinese leaders in Kathmandu seem to project a durable China-Nepal relationship. However, beneath the surface, India's improving relations with Nepal have increased China's unease. It has spurred Chinese leaders to intensify their efforts to woo Nepal's political and military elite. This paper focuses on the military dimension and explores this delegation's proposals while evaluating China's predicament and India's prospects in Nepal.

#### Nepal-China military ties

China's military relations with Nepal have historically been among the weakest compared to its other South Asian neighbours, despite significant political, economic, and social engagements over recent decades. This underdevelopment persists due to structural factors, with the military aspect playing a pivotal role.

During the initial decades, military connections between China and Nepal were minimal. As the Commander-in-Chief of Nepal's Armed Forces, the Nepalese Monarch addressed most military issues raised by the Chinese. However, Nepal's transition to a republic in 2008 and anti-China protests preceding the Beijing Olympics, prompted China to diversify and strengthen its political and military engagements with Nepal. Nonetheless, this collaboration primarily focused on enhancing Nepal's military capabilities for UN peacekeeping, disaster management, and internal security, facilitated through grants, training, infrastructure development, and joint exercises.

China closed borders during 2020-23 and suspended all military engagements impeding material and personnel exchanges until mid-2023.

Despite these efforts, a lingering hesitation persists in their bilateral military interactions due to Nepal's enduring special military ties with India. These ties, characterised by frequent joint military exercises, material support, and the significant presence of

Gurkha soldiers and veterans, are substantial. They have posed challenges for China in establishing an equally influential military partnership with Nepal.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic further strained China-Nepal military relations. China closed borders during 2020-23 and suspended all military engagements impeding material and personnel exchanges until mid-2023. Consequently, this unofficial blockade significantly impacted mutual trust, underscoring the fragility of military ties amidst broader geopolitical dynamics.

#### Post-COVID military cooperation

Following the relaxation of the COVID-19 restrictions in 2023, a Chinese military delegation led by Major General Yue Ande from the PLA's Tibet Military Command visited Nepal on 16 August 2023. During this visit, agreements were reached to revive the Sagarmatha joint military exercise series, and multiple seats were offered for Nepal Army (NA) officers in Chinese military training academies. China also offered four seats in the annual Defense and Strategic Studies Course at China's College of Defense Studies (CDS). This visit signalled a potential resurgence in bilateral military-to-military interactions.

The Zhang Baoqun delegation is the second one to visit Nepal within seven months. It aimed to bolster military cooperation by advancing an armoured personnel carrier (APC) procurement contract, proposing the installation of an ammunition plant, resuming Sagarmatha joint military exercises, inviting more NA officers for training in Chinese military institutions, and increasing overall military cooperation.

**Structural factors:** The camouflage At first glance Zhang's proposals appear harmless, seemingly designed to rejuvenate the military camaraderie between China and Nepal. However, it involves enhancing Chinese military influence in Nepal, potentially at India's expense.

For instance, the process to purchase the 26 APCs has been ongoing since the last few Nepalese administrations. The NA finally decided to purchase them from a US-blacklisted Chinese manufacturer, NORINCO, rejecting cheaper Indian bids. In 2023, accusations of corruption and price inflation emerged, leading to the current Nepal PM freezing the contract. Nonetheless, the NA has remained adamant about the decision based on its historical ties with the manufacturer. The Chinese delegations are therefore lobbying hard to convince the Nepalese Administration to conclude it early and ward off any other competitor.

Accusations of corruption and price inflation emerged, leading to the current Nepal PM freezing the contract. Nonetheless, the NA has remained adamant about the

decision based on its historical ties with the manufacturer.

Likewise, up to 2022, Chinese manufacturers were preferred ammunition suppliers to Nepal after it switched from its southern neighbour. However, the quality of Chinese ammunition remains subpar. Consequently, in 2022, Nepal decided to procure ammunition from an Indian company, SSS Defence. This Indian company outcompeted Chinese manufacturers in an open bidding contract. As anticipated, Zhang's delegation has proposed installing an ammunition plant for the NA, aimed at undermining the Indian re-entry into the NA's ammunition inventory.

Similarly, the Sagarmatha joint military exercise has been on hiatus since 2019, after being held twice in 2017 and 2018 with enthusiastic support from the KP Sharma Oli government. Oli's administration aimed to bolster its communist credentials with China and diminish India's influence within the NA. However, despite Oli's efforts, changing regional politics and military dynamics thwarted his objectives, leading to the suspension of the joint military exercise with China. Since August 2023, China has endeavoured to revive the joint exercise, without any success.

Military training at the College of Defense Studies  
China's PLA operates around 67 military academies, with nearly half providing training to foreign military personnel.[1] The College of Defense Studies (CDS), part of the PLA's National Defense University (NDU), is the primary institution for graduate-level international military education. Offering short and extended courses, the CDS aims to train officers and foster relationships with trainees from the global south. Its year-long Defense and Strategic Studies Course for Colonels and Brigadiers awards a master's degree to foreign officers, shaping the military elites of participating nations.

However, foreign military graduates are instructed at a satellite campus in northern Beijing, separate from their counterparts in the PLA NDU. This arrangement restricts their opportunities for interaction and relationship-building with PLA officers. Instructors at the CDS curtail discussion opportunities and adhere strictly to the official party line. This segregation between Chinese and foreign officer trainees, including officers from Nepal, combined with the lingering language barrier, constitutes a significant weakness of this training program.

India holds a longstanding advantage over China in the military sphere, which China struggles to diminish.

In contrast, Nepalese officers receive training in Indian academies alongside Indian officer trainees. This shared experience encompasses military language, culture, medium of instruction, and various other aspects, enriching their training and fostering deep

connections within the Indian system. Consequently, India holds a longstanding advantage over China in the military sphere, which China struggles to diminish.

#### Conclusion

The successive Chinese military delegations and their proposals signify a sustained effort to achieve three objectives. China aims to establish a connection between its military-industrial complex and the Nepalese Armed Forces. This entails fostering an extensive military material supply relationship, which would bind Nepal to China for an extended period, particularly for spare parts and service support functions.

Furthermore, China perceives that its focused efforts to strengthen the military capabilities of India's neighbouring countries will facilitate closer ties with them. The improved capabilities, combined with a military elite trained by China, are expected to boost these states' confidence in engaging in dialogue with India. Additionally, there is a possibility that they may be malleable to provoke disputes to divert Indian attention and undermine its capabilities.

The improved capabilities, combined with a military elite trained by China, are expected to boost these states' confidence in engaging in dialogue with India. Finally, the PLA is also delving into safeguarding China's economic interests and expanding its diplomatic relations. Thus, an improved military relationship will also facilitate China's other economic and political initiatives in Nepal. This includes addressing the sluggish progress in the Belt and Road Initiative.

India must elevate its efforts in Nepal, particularly concerning the Nepalese Armed Forces, to counteract these Chinese objectives. Leveraging its traditional strengths and resolving lingering issues can help India mitigate Chinese interference effectively.

### Chinese Language Day observed in Nepal

19 April 2024, [English News](#)



*This photo shows learners performing a dance at an event held to mark the 15th United Nations Chinese Language Day in Kathmandu, Nepal, April 19, 2024.*

"Learning the Chinese language isn't just learning the language," said 15-year-old Shreyna Shrestha. "It's learning a lot of other skills as well, such as communication skills, and social skills."

KATHMANDU, April 20 (Xinhua) -- Learners and teachers of the Chinese language gathered in the Nepali capital on Friday to sing songs and perform dances to mark the 15th United Nations Chinese Language Day.

Animation dubbing and poetry recitation were also performed by learners and teachers from the Confucius Institutes at Tribhuvan University and Kathmandu University and the Confucius Classroom at Learning Realm International School, co-organizers of the event.

Asha Ram Maharjan and his son Alok Maharjan sang a song in Chinese together.

The UN Chinese Language Day, which falls on April 20, is being observed around the world under the theme of "Chinese Language: Connecting Cultures Through the Bridge of Mutual Learning."

Saying all the learners "performed well," Chairman of Nepal Language Commission Gopal Thakur noted that the UN celebrates the Chinese Language Day as a means to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity in the organization and that the Chinese language is now one of the languages of employment among the Nepalese.

Thakur described the Confucius Institute as a "trustworthy institution" to promote mutual cooperation in the field of language and culture, adding "I expect such institutes will help reduce poverty to some extent in Nepal and wish them to flourish."

On the occasion, representatives from Qinghai Nationalities University, East China University of Technology, Hebei University of Economics and Business and Beijing International Chinese College, which are co-building the Confucius Institutes and the Confucius Classroom, voiced readiness to deepen cooperation in Chinese education.

The Chinese learning in Nepal has received strong support from the Nepalese government and people from all walks of life, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal Chen Song said, noting that more than 40 primary and secondary schools in the country have offered Chinese language courses as well.

"By learning Chinese, Nepali students and people from all walks of life have not only enhanced mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples, but also injected new vitality into Nepal's cultural diversity and social development," Chen told the audience.

Asha Ram Maharjan learned Chinese six years ago, while his son Alok did it about one year ago, because it is good for their family business of statues. The

Maharjans have been importing and exporting statues to Lhasa, the capital of China's Xizang Autonomous Region.

"I'm very happy to have a chance to sing a Chinese song," said the father.

Krishav Pant, 14, has studied Chinese for more than seven years and did well in past Chinese proficiency competitions.

"I believe that learning Chinese will help me get a scholarship in a college in China, which will help me go towards a brighter future and also help me learn about Chinese culture and learn about how China has become such a powerful nation and bring the technologies and ideologies to my country and help Nepal also develop just like China," he said.

For 15-year-old Shreyna Shrestha, she is getting more from learning Chinese.

"Learning the Chinese language isn't just learning the language," she said. "It's learning a lot of other skills as well, such as communication skills, and social skills."

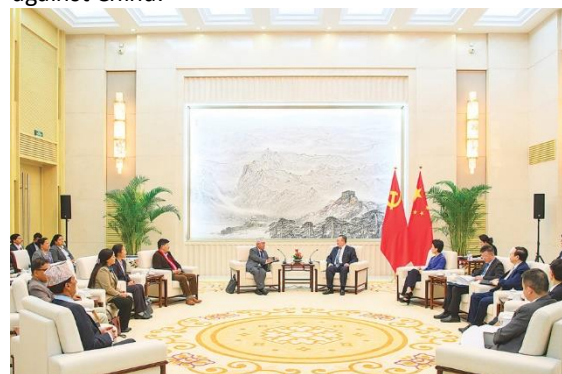
"So I think by learning Chinese, those skills of mine have definitely been furnished and even going to China in the future will be quite convenient for me due to my familiarity with the language and the culture. So I think learning Chinese has been really effective to me," she added.

### Beijing's message: Won't tolerate anti-China activities in Nepal

20 April 2024, [Kathmandu Post](#)

A senior leader of the Communist Party of China warned that Beijing will not tolerate any third-country activities in Nepal targeting China.

During a meeting on Thursday with the general secretary of the ruling CPN (Maoist Centre), Dev Gurung, who is currently in Beijing on a 10-day visit, Liu Jianchao, minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee (IDCPC), told Gurung and the Maoist delegation that Beijing will not tolerate any actions in Nepal by third countries targeted against China.



Maoist Centre politicians meet Chinese leaders in Beijing. Photo: Courtesy of IDCPC

The IDCPC is in charge of maintaining relations with political parties of other countries, especially fellow communist parties.

A jumbo delegation from the Maoist Centre is currently in China at the invitation of the IDCPC and it held talks with Liu and other leaders in Beijing on Thursday and Friday.

“We are in favour of world peace,” Liu told Gurung and the visiting Maoist delegation. “If any country tries to act against China in Nepal, we will not tolerate it.”

But Liu, who is being spoken of as the next foreign minister of China, did not name the country, Gurung told the Post over the phone from Beijing.

Earlier in January-end, Sun Haiyan, vice-minister of the IDCPC, made similar remarks in Kathmandu during a roundtable with major party leaders. Sun had alleged that some countries were trying to disrupt development cooperation between Nepal and China and defame bilateral relations.

“...Some criticise our relations. Some are trying to sabotage our bilateral relations and some have increased activity against China,” Sun had said during a consultative conference in Kathmandu between Nepali political leaders and the Communist Party of China. Her statement had sparked a controversy in Nepal.

During their Thursday meeting, Gurung told Liu that Nepal is quite aware about the elements trying to destabilise Nepal-China relations and creating misunderstanding and conflict between the two countries.

“Their [Liu’s] focus was mostly Western countries but he did not name any particular country,” said Gurung, adding that Nepal’s priority is stability and it will continue to focus on the principles of Panchasheel.

Besides discussing what China wants to see in Nepal, other issues included Nepal’s failure to present a list of projects to be executed under the Belt and Road Initiative, according to Gurung.

Liu also proposed involving political parties and other channels including stakeholders to facilitate the execution of various Chinese initiatives in Nepal, Gurung said.

This is the first-of-its-kind proposal from Beijing whose blueprint remains unknown.

Beijing is also displeased with the progress on the BRI, delays in implementing Chinese-funded projects in Nepal, and the slow progress of projects undertaken by the Chinese contractors and firms.

“We and our party thwarted attempts to destabilise our relations with China in the past, and the current government led by Pushpa Kamal Dahal will check such attempts in the future too,” Gurung conveyed to the IDCPC team.

Besides Liu, other senior IDCPC leaders including Sun were present at the meeting.

“Liu said that any military or security activities in Nepal targeting China will not be tolerated. Any move by a third country inside Nepal targeting China is not acceptable to China,” Gurung quoted Liu as saying.

Gurung said he assured the Chinese leaders that Nepal is committed to one-China policy and will not allow any activities detrimental to China’s security interests. In his remarks, Liu told the visiting Maoist delegation that Beijing is pleased with the new political equation in Nepal and stressed the need for unity among Nepal’s leftist parties, said Gurung.

This is not the first time that China has encouraged unity among leftist parties in Nepal in general and pushed for unity between the CPN-UML and the CPN (Maoist Centre) in particular. In 2018, too, Beijing pushed for the unity between the UML and Maoist Centre.

The two parties merged to be the Nepal Communist Party, but that unity did not last beyond three years. Once again, Beijing is encouraging similar unity after the UML and the Maoist Centre partnered to form a new government in March first week after Prime Minister Dahal ended his alliance with the Nepali Congress.

But UML leaders have been dismissing the chances of a new leftist unity. Recently, UML Chairman KP Oli outright rejected the idea of unity between communist parties of Nepal.

“At present, unity among leftist parties is not a necessity,” Oli said while addressing the UML’s parliamentary party on Monday.

He, however, said that “there is a need for cooperation among the forces that are in favour of good governance and national unity.” There is also an opposition voice in the Maoist Centre on the potential unity between the UML and Maoist Centre.

“We are pleased with the formation of government through partnership between UML, Maoist Centre and other communist parties,” Gurung quoted Liu as saying.

“The unity between the two communist parties is good for the Nepali people. We want a stable communist government in Nepal,” Gurung said, again quoting Liu.

“We want to see the leftist parties of Nepal united for the greater stability and prosperity of the country. We also believe that Nepal’s prosperity lies in the hands of communist forces. We are always in favor of stability and development and stand ready to provide all possible support to Nepal,” Gurung quoted Liu as saying at the meeting.

It is natural for any communist party in the world to favour unity among the communist parties in other parts of the world, Gurung said.

“Liu said, in recent years, under the joint leadership of President Xi Jinping and Nepali leaders, relations



between the two countries have continued to develop," the IDCPC said in its statement released on Friday.

"The Chinese side supports the Nepali side in exploring a development path that suits its national conditions, and is willing to help Nepal prosper and develop."

"The CPC attaches great importance to its friendly relations with the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center). Under the new situation, it is willing to expand exchanges between the two parties, deepen exchanges and mutual learning of experience in state governance and administration, and promote practical cooperation between the two sides in agriculture, investment, infrastructure, border trade and tourism through 'political party + [plus]' and other channels, so as to push China-Nepal relations to a new level," said the statement.

Liu in the meeting had expressed his displeasure at Nepal's failure to present a list of projects to be developed under the BRI and as per the agreements signed between two sides after 2016 including during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Nepal in 2019 October.

Gurung thanked the Chinese side for its long-term support in safeguarding Nepal's sovereignty and independence and achieving economic and social development, according to the Chinese statement.

"The Nepali side firmly adheres to the one-China principle and does not allow any force to use Nepal's territory for anti-China activities. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) highly admires the CPC's governance achievements and governance concepts, and is willing to further strengthen exchanges between the two parties, deepen theoretical exchanges, promote Nepal-China relations for healthy development, and promote regional peace, and development and stability," the IDCPC statement read.

### Nyingchi apples' first export to Nepal

13 April 2024, [China Daily](#)



Customs officers inspect apples loaded for export to Nepal at the

*Nyingchi Customs, Xizang autonomous region, on Wednesday. CHINA DAILY*

More than 23 metric tons of fresh apples produced in Nyingchi of the Xizang autonomous region were exported to Nepal through Gyirong Port on Wednesday.

Xizang Shangcheng Health Industry Co, based in Nyingchi, dispatched its first shipment of apples to Nepal, which were valued at more than 194,100 yuan (\$26,800).

The company has signed an agreement to export 99 tons of apples from Nyingchi to Nepal. A second batch of 26 tons has been prepared and will be exported in the next few days, it said.

Renowned for their lustrous red appearance, high sugar content, excellent taste and pristine quality, Nyingchi apples have garnered favor among consumers.

A planting area reaching 2,520 hectares in 2023, an annual yield of approximately 15,000 tons and a production value of around 170 million yuan underscore their substantial export potential.

Lhasa Customs has been emphasizing the transformation of Nyingchi into a pioneering hub for reform and opening-up, and has explored international markets for superior products from Xizang.

By leveraging Nyingchi's geographical advantages, abundant resources and ecological strengths, customs has played a pivotal role in facilitating the successful export of apples, actively engaging in research and guiding companies to venture into international trade. "We have tailored our support to meet the specific needs of companies, offering personalized business consulting and policy guidance," said Wang Cunrui, deputy director of the Nyingchi Customs under Lhasa Customs

"This has included assisting companies in orchard registrations for export, enhancing their quality management systems for orchard management and production processes, and implementing streamlined customs clearance procedures, effectively reducing associated costs," said Wang.

Trucks laden with apples have set out from Nyingchi and are anticipated to grace the tables of Nepalese households in the coming days.

Li Longjing, head of Xizang Shangcheng Health Industry, expressed optimism about the future and said that customs provided them with extensive professional guidance across various aspects, instilling confidence in their efforts to explore the South Asian market.

"We anticipate exporting 1,000 tons of apples this year and have plans to expand our exports to include apple seedlings, edible fungi and other products," said Li.

This venture holds the promise of transforming small-scale fruit production into a significant industry,

driving prosperity and increasing incomes for local communities in Xizang.

Looking ahead, Lhasa Customs is committed to focusing on establishing Nyingchi as a pioneering area for reform and opening-up in the region, thereby contributing to the region's sustainable economic development.

### **Nepal Sounds Alarm Over Chinese Encroachment, Calls for International Intervention**

April 12 2024, Yuvraj Tyagi, [Republic World](#)

China's construction of an embankment along the Nepal-Tibet border, diverting the Arun River and encroaching on Nepalese territory, has raised alarm in Nepal.

Kathmandu: China's recent encroachment into Nepalese territory along the Nepal-Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) border has sparked widespread concern and condemnation. The construction of a one-kilometer-long embankment along the Arun River in Kimathanka, a remote hamlet in the North-East of Sankhuwasabha district, has not only diverted the river's natural course but also resulted in the loss of approximately nine hectares of Nepali land. Furthermore, localities in the region now face the imminent threat of submersion during the rainy season due to this construction.

This latest incursion is part of a series of Chinese violations of Nepalese sovereignty that have escalated in recent years. Despite multiple reports and field reconnaissance by Nepalese survey teams confirming these encroachments, the Government of Nepal has yet to formally acknowledge them, possibly out of fear of antagonizing its northern neighbour. However, the lack of acknowledgement has only emboldened China to continue its aggressive expansionist agenda unchecked.

**Nepal's struggle against Chinese aggression**

China's encroachments extend beyond territorial violations and include a range of nefarious activities by Chinese nationals within Nepal. These include abuse of fair trade practices, wildlife smuggling, human trafficking, gold smuggling, ATM hacking, online fraud, and espionage. Recent data from Nepalese authorities reveal a significant increase in arrests of Chinese nationals for various crimes, highlighting the extent of China's illicit activities within Nepal.



One Chinese media publication had renamed Mount Everest (known in Nepal as Sagarmatha) as Mount Qomolangma, claiming it as part of the Chinese territory. This sparked outrage among Nepalese citizens. In another instance, China unilaterally laid a 150m-long wired fence in the Rui village of Gorkha District in 2020 and restricted the movement of Nepalese nationals in the area. The latest incidents came to light in 2022-23, when the construction of a Chinese road in Surkhang VDC in Mustang District of Gandaki Province was reported.

Diplomatically, Nepal has historically maintained a policy of non-alignment and neutrality, seeking to safeguard its sovereignty while engaging in constructive dialogue with its neighbours. However, China's aggressive behaviour poses a significant challenge to Nepal's diplomatic autonomy and regional stability. Beijing has primarily focused on infrastructural projects since the launch of the Border Roads Initiative. However, China's aggressive economic monopolistic ambitions created more trouble for its Himalayan neighbour. Nepal shares two border points with China and has seen an increasing presence of Chinese nationals in Nepal, a rapid increase since 2014-15 as Chinese-funded projects seemingly grew. By encroaching on Nepalese territory and engaging in illicit activities, China undermines Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity, threatening the delicate balance of power in the region.

**A strategic buffer zone between India and China**

The strategic implications of China's actions in Nepal cannot be overstated. Nepal, nestled amidst the towering peaks of the Himalayas, serves as a vital buffer zone between India and China. Its rugged terrain and geographical features act as a natural barrier, making direct territorial expansion challenging for both countries. Furthermore, Nepal's strategic location and diplomatic relations make it a crucial bridge between South Asia and East Asia, facilitating regional connectivity and economic cooperation.



Indian and Nepalese troops in joint Exercise Surya Kiran XV.  
| Credit- ADGPI

Ultimately, the preservation of Nepal's sovereignty and territorial integrity is paramount. As a sovereign nation, Nepal has the right to defend its borders and protect its citizens from external threats. By standing firm against Chinese aggression and asserting its rights on the international stage, Nepal can safeguard its sovereignty and uphold the principles of peace, security, and stability in the region.

### Increased traffic at Tibet-Nepal border crossing

April 2024, [International Campaign for Tibet](#)

Chinese state media reported increased traffic at the Dram border, which connects Tibet and Nepal via the Nyalam Entry-Exit Border Inspection Station. According to reports, a total of 100,716 individuals and 4,450 vehicles have crossed the border since the beginning of the year, up to April 1, 2024.

This surge in traffic comes in the wake of the border's reopening on September 1 last year, following pandemic-related lockdown measures. Since then, a total of 234,634 people and 12,699 vehicles have crossed the border, as reported by Chinese state media.

Authorities have attributed the increase in traffic to heightened police deployment and expedited customs clearance processes for inbound and outbound passengers. While the traffic is largely associated with trade activities, the Dram border has undergone substantial regulation and fortification in recent years to prevent any attempts by Tibetans to seek asylum abroad. As a result, the number of Tibetan refugees has drastically decreased by 99% since 2008.

### Deputy PM Shrestha says he proposed new corridors to China

01 April 2024, [Kathmandu Post](#)

Are the stalled Nepal-China ties finally getting some momentum? Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha has some ideas on that score.

Shrestha says he has proposed building Nepal-China economic and development corridors with Chinese officials. The objective, he said, is to boost economic growth, trade, tourism, and connectivity between Nepal and three Chinese provinces that oversee and engage in various bilateral activities.

Shrestha, who returned home from China on Monday after a nine-day official visit at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, said he had positive discussions with Chinese leaders and officials on the development of the corridors with three Chinese provinces—Tibet, Sichuan and Chongqing.

These three provinces have made significant contributions to nurturing relations with Nepal, according to several Nepali politicians who have recently visited China.

Beijing has entrusted these provinces with engaging, promoting and expanding relations with Nepal under China's "peripheral diplomacy." Of late Nepal has seen a series of back-to-back high-level visits from these provinces, and when Nepali leaders visit China, their first destinations are Tibet, Sichuan and Chongqing.

"We had very positive discussions on developing economic and development corridors between Nepal and China," Shrestha said. "The focus of my visit was economic diplomacy. Nepal has been thinking about this new concept [the idea of corridors] after China introduced the Trans Himalayan Multi Dimensional Connectivity Network (THMDCN), which comprises economic and connectivity corridors to be developed under the Belt and Road Initiative."

The corridor starting from the Nepal-Tibet border will reach Chongqing through Sichuan province, Bishnu Pukar Shrestha, Nepali ambassador to China, told the Post over the phone from Beijing.

"If we can develop such a corridor, that would serve as an economic, trade and developmental vehicle between the two countries and open more vistas of cooperation. The concept is in a nascent phase, and it will take some time to develop its blueprint," said ambassador Shrestha.

Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha said a major achievement of his visit is the reciprocal visa waiver for Nepali citizens travelling to China.

"The Chinese are positive about it."

Nepal has been waiving visa fees for Chinese nationals since 2016 and has been looking for similar reciprocal treatment from China.

Although Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha said that China is ready to reopen the 14 traditional border points closed during the Covid pandemic, an official at the foreign ministry, requesting anonymity, said that is unlikely anytime soon.

While four traditional border points have already reopened since 2023, some are encountering difficulties, said officials.

“Reopening the remaining border points will involve technical challenges. But if they are reopened, it will be easier for our citizens living along the Nepal-China border to do business and sustain their livelihoods,” said a member of Shrestha’s delegation.

During the visit, besides holding delegation-level talks with his Chinese counterpart, Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha also called on the chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Wang Huning; vice minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, Sun Haiyan; secretary of the Chongqing Municipal Party Committee of CPC, Yuan Jiajun; party secretary of CPC Tibet, Wang Junzheng; and Sichuan province governor Huang Qiang, among others.

DPM Shrestha, who is also the vice-chairman of the CPN (Maoist Centre), had an hour-long one-on-one with Wang and other CPC leaders. They discussed Nepal’s political situation, among other things, according to a Nepali official who was part of the visit. The Chinese leaders wanted to know if the government in Kathmandu would be stable after the entry of the CPN-UML in the ruling coalition, according to the official.

During his meeting with Shrestha, Chinese foreign minister Wang repeatedly emphasised the need for political stability, but Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha explained how Nepali political system is different from the Chinese one, the official said.

“In the Chinese system, one party rules from top to bottom and the decisions made by the leadership are implemented uniformly. But Nepali political system is different, and due to the composition of [hung] Parliament, governments change frequently,” Shrestha told the Chinese leaders, according to the official.

“We have to face opposition parties too. But we are moving ahead with good planning.”

During the visit, the Nepali side proposed elevating the existing foreign secretary-led bilateral mechanism to the foreign minister level in order to discuss various aspects of Nepal-China relations on a regular basis.

Both sides are said to be positive on setting up the joint commission at the foreign minister level, similar to one Nepal has had with India for decades.

“But, while the Nepali side proposed the mechanism, the Chinese side has yet to officially respond,” the official said.

The two sides also discussed finalising the long-due implementation plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. The draft of the plan was first proposed by the Chinese side in late 2019 and both sides have exchanged several comments and amendments.

“One of the main objectives of the visit was to finalise the BRI implementation plan, but that could not

happen. We had already agreed on signing the BRI implementation plan during the prime minister’s China visit last September,” said Shrestha. “We revisited the issue.”

“There is also a discussion about whether to take loans or grants under the BRI. Naturally our priority is grants, not loans. Building projects whether with loan or grant comes only in the third stage [following Nepal’s selection of projects and then sharing of their details with China]. So we have to select projects carefully,” Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha told reporters upon landing at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu.

Ambassador Shrestha said Nepal will discuss the project financing modality only after signing the BRI implementation plan.

“Once we give final touches to the BRI implementation plan, we will proceed to the signing stage. It will take some time, probably another two-three months,” ambassador Shrestha said

“We have proposed different modalities for the implementation plan including grant and concessional loans. But we are not in a position to accept commercial and costly loans,” added the ambassador. According to a commentary published on China.com, a Chinese news portal, and widely shared in WeChat, a popular Chinese app, the goal of Shrestha’s trip was to persuade China to convert the loan given to Nepal to build the Pokhara International Airport into a grant. During his meeting with the Chinese leader, Shrestha said that if China does not transform the Pokhara airport loan into a grant, then Nepal will not be able to entertain high-interest loans from China in the future, according to the commentary.

The commentary also mentions the ongoing investigation by the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority into the Pokhara International Airport construction.

The Chinese commentary has termed Shrestha’s request to convert the loan into grant as ‘unreasonable’.

“Now some people in Nepal are claiming that if China does not agree, they will not consider subsequent high-interest loans. In fact, they are threatening us. If the loans are not converted into grants, Nepal may not continue to cooperate with China on the basis of the Belt and Road Initiative. And why is Nepal so bent on challenging China? Then we have to mention India. You know, when it learned that Nepal decided to strengthen cooperation with China, India put pressure on Nepal many times,” stated the commentary in Mandarin.

The commentary further went to say that with the outbreak of the “India Quit” movement in Bangladesh and the Maldives’ demand for India to withdraw its troops, and the fact that Nepal’s pro-Indian Nepali

Congress Party was kicked out of the Cabinet not long ago, the People's Liberation Army military delegation also visited the Maldives and Nepal from the beginning to the middle of this month.

"This series of events has intensified the uneasiness of the Modi government, fearing that another South Asian country will seek to escape India's control. Therefore, it cannot be ruled out that India once again coerced and induced Nepal to achieve the purpose of getting them to withdraw from the Belt and Road Initiative and stay away from China," stated the commentary. "Nepal used the BRI as a bargaining chip to blackmail us into waiving loans."

"Perhaps it was because it could not withstand the Modi government's intrusion and finally chose to compromise," it added.

"At the same time, there is another possibility, that is Nepal feels that China and India are trying hard to compete for influence in South Asia... But once we agree on Nepal's request, other countries will inevitably follow suit, and won't we be roasted on the fire? Therefore, no matter what motivations Nepal has for wanting to default on China, we refuse to be taken advantage of," writes the Chinese news site in its commentary on Shrestha's visit.

During the visit, China committed to an enhanced level of cooperation in different sectors, said a press note issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the visit. It said the two sides also agreed to expedite the implementation of the past accords and will resume regular meetings of the bilateral mechanisms.

"China is also ready to provide its pasture areas to the Nepali farmers as per the agreement on trans-frontier pasturing by border inhabitants signed in 2012 and agreed for electrification in some rural areas of Nepal-China border. Both sides are also positive to conduct direct bus service between Kathmandu and Lhasa. We have also requested to facilitate the export of cooked buffalo meat, haylage grass, plant-based medicinal products, vegetable fruits and other Nepali products," reads the press note.

Deputy Prime Minister Shrestha, during his meeting with Chinese leaders and officials, also requested China to set up a multi-functional lab on the Nepal-China border; sought the use of more Chinese capital and technology in Nepal's agriculture sector; proposed more flights to Kathmandu and Pokhara from different Chinese cities; and asked for greater participation of Chinese investors including high-level Chinese leadership at Nepal's third investment summit to be held on April 28 and 29 in Kathmandu, according to the press note.

The two sides are ready to work to expand cross-border railway as well as road and air connectivity, and expand the electricity grid so that connectivity between Nepal and China will increase, the note

further said. The two countries have also agreed to come up with specific projects in areas like agriculture, tourism, hydropower and infrastructure.

### 'China positive to Nepal's request for free visa privilege to Nepali nationals'

01 April 2024, [My Republica](#)

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Narayan Kaji Shrestha has made a request to China for granting free visas to Nepali nationals wishing to visit China. Minister Shrestha reported a favorable reaction from the Chinese authorities to this proposal.

Upon his return to Kathmandu on Monday morning after a seven-day official visit to China, Minister Shrestha shared this information at a press conference held at Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA). He stated, "Since 2016, Nepal has been offering free visas to Chinese tourists. In the spirit of reciprocity, I have requested free visa provisions for Nepalis visiting China. The Chinese side has responded positively to our request."

Minister Shrestha's visit to China began on March 24, following an invitation from the Chinese Foreign Minister. The visit included several high-level meetings aimed at bolstering economic diplomacy between the two nations. "My primary focus was on enhancing our economic ties and interdependence with China for Nepal's development and prosperity. I proposed the idea of developing a development corridor linking Nepal with Tibet, Sichuan, and Chongqing in China as a pivotal initiative for our achievements. These discussions were centered around our current economic diplomacy priorities," he elaborated.

The talks also covered finalizing and implementing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. Minister Shrestha mentioned discussions on various cooperative ventures, including allowing Nepalis in the border areas access to grazing lands in China's Tibet Autonomous Region, electrification of Nepali border villages, resumption of direct bus services between Kathmandu and Lhasa, and establishing multifunctional labs along the Nepal-China border. The Chinese side showed a positive stance on providing support for the export of Nepali agricultural products and improving the sector's productivity.

An agreement to increase flights between Kathmandu, Pokhara, and various Chinese cities was reached, aiming to boost trade, people-to-people relations, and tourism. Minister Shrestha highlighted the reopening of the Rasuwagadhi-Kerung, Tatopani-Zhangmu, Yari-Purang, and Nechung-Lizi (Korala) trade routes, with China agreeing to reopen 14 traditional trade points closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible.

Furthermore, both nations agreed to establish a joint commission at the foreign minister level to discuss and enhance the friendly relations between Nepal and China regularly.

### New township reported coming up in Lhokha in China's Tibet-border build-up

29 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

China is strengthening infrastructure close to the line of actual control (LAC) in occupied Tibet, with a major construction project taking place for a new township in Shannan (Tibetan: Lhokha), in south-eastern Tibet, reported the timesnownews.com Apr 28.

A new project is coming up in Luobusha (Tibetan: Lhunpo Zhol Township in Nagartse County) in Shannan Prefecture, a sparsely-populated part of Tibet, with less than four lakh people living in an area of about 80,000 sq km. Importantly, it is about 125 km from the LAC, roughly north of Arunachal Pradesh, the report said.

The housing project is reported to involve the construction of 164 houses to be begun next month to be ready by the end of next year. The report saw this as more evidence of China's increased emphasis on infrastructure build-up close to the LAC. A housing project could of course be for civilians and if necessary, for soldiers, it said.

The report also said that with the onset of spring, work on military infrastructure and training had begun in earnest. These were stated to include:

- The 84th aviation brigade was involved in an exercise involving the Z-19 and Z-18 helicopters.
- The 84th air defence regiment was involved in missile firing in the Aksai Chin area
- The 99th Air Brigade participated in flight training of the J-16 aircraft, a fighter similar to the Indian Air Force's Sukhoi-30. The Chinese air force began using it about ten years ago and is one of its frontline fighters. Besides, a new 4-km road track was reported to be under construction in the Shaksgam area, which could become "pucca" in the future and may be used to link up with a labour camp in the area.

Reports have also been cited as saying infrastructure in Tashigang (Zhaaxigang), east of Ladakh, in western Tibet, was being upgraded. Located close to Tashigang is Shiquanhe (Tibetan: Sengge Khabab, the main town and administrative seat of Ngari Prefecture); here too, the upgradation of military infrastructure was reported to be evident.

Meanwhile, new Chinese dual-use 'Xiaokang' border villages are also regularly being built and older ones being "populated" along the disputed stretches of the LAC, especially in the eastern sector, to reinforce PLA positions as well as lay claim to territory, reported the timesofindia.com Apr 29.

Previous reports have noted that China has been building as many as 628 such border defence villages to fortify the borders of occupied Tibet with India and Bhutan over the last few years.

"All this clearly indicates PLA will continue to permanently station troops in forward locations along the LAC, even if eventually there is some sort of disengagement at the two major persisting face-off sites at Depsang and Demchok in eastern Ladakh," the report quoted an unnamed Indian source as saying.

There are currently 50,000 to 60,000 PLA troops with heavy weaponry forward deployed in the western (Ladakh) and central sectors (Uttarakhand, Himachal) as well as 90,000 soldiers in the eastern one (Sikkim, Arunachal), the report noted.

## China - Pakistan

### China Coast Guard holds second high-level meeting with Pakistani counterpart

26 April 2024, [China Mail](#)



The China Coast Guard (CCG) and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) held the second high-level meeting in Beijing on April 24. The meeting was co-chaired by Major General Yu Zhong, director general of CCG, and Rear Admiral Imtiaz Ali, director general of PMSA.

The two sides jointly reviewed the results of bilateral cooperation in recent years, and spoke positively of the effective implementation of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on strengthening cooperation and exchanges in maritime law enforcement. They also conducted in-depth exchanges on issues such as personnel visits, information exchange, training exchanges, ship visits, joint exercises as well as joint combat against transnational crimes at sea, and exchanged views on topics of mutual concern.

The two sides vowed to further deepen practical maritime cooperation, jointly safeguard maritime security order, and play a positive role in promoting the China-Pakistan all-weather strategic cooperative partnership to a higher level.

## Former Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif embarks on 'private visit' to China

23 April 2024, [First Post](#)

Accompanied by his grandson Junaid Safdar and personal staff, Sharif boarded a Chinese Southern Airlines flight from Lahore airport, as disclosed by the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), of which he is the supremo

Former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif departed for China Monday evening for a five-day "private visit," maintaining a low-profile approach to the trip.

Accompanied by his grandson Junaid Safdar and personal staff, Sharif boarded a Chinese Southern Airlines flight from Lahore airport, as disclosed by the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), of which he is the supreme leader.

However, specific details of Sharif's agenda during his stay in China were not disclosed by the party.

Reports from local media suggest that Sharif intends to undergo a medical examination in China and engage in meetings with Chinese companies concerning development projects in Punjab, where his daughter Maryam Nawaz serves as chief minister. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar is also said to be accompanying him. Speculation within PML-N circles hints at the possibility of Sharif being on a "special assignment" during his time in China.

Sharif never visited China in the past for medical reasons. He went to the United Kingdom on medical grounds in 2019 and stayed there in self-exile, before his return in 2023 after the fall of Imran Khan's government. His younger brother Shehbaz Sharif is leading a six-party coalition at the Centre.

After his dream of becoming prime minister for a fourth time shattered in the February election, Nawaz Sharif has been keeping a low profile.

## Pakistan strikes \$200m deal with China for solar power conversion

13 April 2024, [Link News](#)

Pakistan has signed a \$200 million Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a Chinese firm to convert a thermal plant to solar power, as per a recent post by the Information Ministry.

The project will upgrade an existing thermal power plant to a 300 MW solar power plant through the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

Furthermore, it will generate 400m units of electricity per year at a significantly lower cost, reducing the per unit cost from Rs45 to Rs40.

Another key advantage of this project is that it will eliminate the need for Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO), resulting

in an estimated savings of \$44m annually due to a reduction in import bills, offering attractive returns to stakeholders.

## Growing Angst against China in Pakistan

11 April 2024, [Baltimore Post- Examiner](#)

A terrorist group linked to the Taliban attacked a convoy of Chinese workers near Gilgit, killing the bus driver and five Chinese nationals. The Chinese are currently working on the Dasu and Diamer dams, which are being built on reclaimed land in Kohistan district and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Investigators revealed that the bus transporting the Chinese was neither bulletproof nor bombproof. Maryam Nawaz, Punjab's chief minister, has accused the Chinese of violating security protocols, and complicating security officials' efforts.

This was the third major attack in less than a week on Pakistan-based Chinese, exacerbating Islamabad's national security concerns. In 2021, nine Chinese engineers working on the Dasu power project were killed in a suicide attack, causing the Chinese company to halt operations for several months.

Both Pakistan and China suspect that Indians and Americans are sabotaging the Chinese interests in Pakistan. Thousands of Chinese are working on multibillion-dollar infrastructure projects in Pakistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The Chinese are also working on several megaprojects in Gilgit-Baltistan, a territory claimed by India.

The Chinese government has demanded a thorough investigation into the fatal explosion. As a precautionary measure, the Chinese also temporarily halted work on the Diamer Dam in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Pakistan accuses the Taliban regime in Kabul of sheltering terrorists who carry out cross-border attacks. These are the same terrorists that Pakistan trained to cause mayhem in Afghanistan and India, and they have now become an embarrassment to Pakistan's military rulers.

Whatever terrorist groups the militants belong to, they demand Sharia law in Pakistan and blame the Pakistani military for being a pawn of non-Muslim western powers.

Many Islamic terrorists also resent Chinese for gross human rights violations and the ongoing genocide against Muslim Uyghurs in China's Xinjiang province. China has the world's largest concentration camp, where more than a million Muslim Uyghurs are still imprisoned for demanding basic religious freedoms.

The Taliban do not approve of Pakistan's double standards, which support and encourage Sharia law in Afghanistan while viewing the same immutable and

flawless Islamic system as harmful to their own country's interests.

Pakistani rulers who used the Taliban to promote terrorism west of the Durand Line forgot that the Taliban would eventually cross the Durand Line and expand their influence in the eastern areas as well.

So far, the Taliban have refused to recognize the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and continue to claim the grand old Indus River as the original demarcation between the two nations.

Some analysts also believe that in the near future, the Taliban will request military equipment from India, indicating a failure in Pakistan's strategic policy.

Terrorist attacks aren't the only concern for Chinese interests in Pakistan. The people of Gilgit have periodically spoken out against Chinese exploitation of their mineral wealth and water bodies.

The glaciers and rivers of Gilgit provide more than half of Pakistan's water needs, and the Chinese are building large dams here to generate tens of thousands of megawatts of electricity, which will be transported to Punjab's industrial hubs.

Gilgit residents do not benefit from these projects because Pakistani decision-making bodies refuse to accommodate their voices. Pakistan's popularity is dwindling in Kashmir and Gilgit as its economic downturn appears imminent. The Pakistani army fears that local angst is weakening its control over the vital disputed territory, which also serves as the sole land link between Pakistan and its ally China.

As we speak, several political parties, civil society organizations, labor unions, and representatives from the mining, travel and tourism industries are protesting in Gilgit to express their dissatisfaction with the absence of autonomy and basic constitutional rights. They are also expressing anger at Pakistan's policy of illegally settling Pakistani citizens in Gilgit to change its ethnic identity.

Recently, an event took place at the Geneva-based United Nations Human Rights Council where the special rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat, lambasted Pakistani authorities for undermining the interests of the people of Gilgit and imposing an alien political system to deny locals their inalienable rights over their lands.

According to Greek politician and former MEP Konstantino Bogdanos, the people of Gilgit lack basic rights. He chastised Pakistan for taking a securitized approach to the region, transforming it into a large prison. He said that the deliberate political marginalization of Gilgit is deeply alarming and no country can afford to keep its people disenfranchised and devoid of basic freedoms.

In a joint statement, Saudi authorities have asked Pakistan's visiting prime minister to resolve the Kashmir and Gilgit issues with India bilaterally. This is

a major setback for Pakistani rulers who expect a third party to intervene to resolve this seven-decade-old chronic dispute.

Whether it's Islamic terrorists, Chinese or Pakistani land grabbers, Gilgit-Baltistan is bound to become the axis of international politics in the coming days.

### **Pakistan-China border reopens for tourism and trade after 4 months closure**

05 April 2024, [Times of India](#)

As per the latest development, Pakistan-China Khunjerab border opens for travel. If reports are to go by, following a closure lasting four months due to harsh winter conditions, the Khunjerab border between Pakistan and China has reopened, ushering in renewed opportunities for both commercial ventures and tourism.

If records are to go by, typically, the bilateral agreement dictates the closure of the border from December 1 to March 31 annually, owing to the extreme cold and heavy snowfall during these months. With the reopening of this vital border crossing, there is optimism for an upsurge in bilateral trade and tourism activities between the two nations.

While the closure period temporarily halted trade and tourism activities, it's noteworthy that the transportation of essential goods for Pakistan's development projects continued uninterrupted across the border. Moreover, alongside the reopening of the Khunjerab border, transportation activities have resumed in the border areas of Gilgit-Baltistan, particularly in Sost, and the Chinese city of Tashghargan. This development signifies a reinvigorated flow of commerce and connectivity between Pakistan and China, promising economic benefits and bolstering bilateral ties.

Situated at a towering altitude of 16,200 ft, Khunjerab Pass serves as the sole link between the two nations over this rugged mountain range. It marks the entry point of the highest paved international road into China, connecting the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China with Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan.

Functioning under a border protocol agreement inked between the two countries in 1985, Khunjerab Pass stands as the highest paved international border at 15,500 ft above sea level. Further reports suggest that the pass remains accessible for travel and trade purposes between April and November each year, further facilitating the socio-economic exchange between the regions.

Notably, on November 12, the Chinese Government had announced the closure of the Khunjerab Pass for four months during winter, just a month after agreeing to keep the high-altitude road open throughout the year, as per the reports.



## China - Taiwan

### Ma Ying-jeou urges Taiwan's next president to respond 'pragmatically' to Xi Jinping's 'olive branch'

15 April 2024, Lawrence Chung, [SCMP](#)

- Island's former leader also calls on William Lai to 'confirm the one-China framework'
- He made the remarks after a trip to the mainland, which included a meeting with Xi

Former Taiwanese leader Ma Ying-jeou has called on the island's president-elect to respond "pragmatically" to the "olive branch" extended by Xi Jinping and to accept the one-China principle.

Ma, who met mainland Chinese leader Xi in Beijing last week, said Taiwan's next leader, William Lai Ching-te, should take note of Xi's goodwill and refrain from "walking the independence path".

Lai, of the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party, was elected in January and will be inaugurated next month.

Using Taiwan's official name for itself, Ma wrote in a Facebook post on Monday that Lai should "follow the Constitution of the Republic of China, confirm the one-China framework based on the constitution, and ensure that the two sides of the strait are not two separate countries".

The ROC constitution, which includes the one-China concept, was adopted by the Nationalist, or Kuomintang, government in Nanjing in 1947. It has remained in effect in Taiwan since the KMT fled to the island and set up an interim government there after being defeated by the Communists in mainland China during the civil war in 1949.

Since she came to power in 2016, incumbent President Tsai Ing-wen, of the DPP, has refused to accept the one-China principle, saying Beijing has never ruled Taiwan and that the island is already sovereign and independent.

Tsai's second four-year term ends on May 20. Her successor, Lai, has been denounced by Beijing as a "troublemaker" and "obstinate separatist".

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary. Most countries, including the United States, do not recognise Taiwan as an independent state but oppose any attempt to take it by force.

In his post on Monday, Ma called on Lai to "guarantee not to pursue Taiwan independence, allow both sides of the strait to return to the common political foundation of the 1992 consensus and engage in various exchanges on an equal and dignified basis".

The consensus is a tacit agreement between Beijing and Taipei that there is only "one China", but each side has its own interpretation of what that means.

Ma said that at time of unabating conflicts around the world "there is a need to ensure peace and prosperity" across the Taiwan Strait, adding that both the US and Europe would want to see regional security maintained.

"Mr Xi has extended an olive branch to us, and I sincerely hope that for the well-being of the Taiwanese people, [Lai] can respond to him pragmatically," Ma said.

Ma, who led Taiwan from 2008 to 2016 and remains an influential figure in the Beijing-friendly KMT, returned to the island on Thursday from an 11-day tour of Guangdong, Shaanxi and Beijing with a group of Taiwanese students.

Expressing "special thanks" to Xi for his reception on Wednesday, Ma said he had told Xi that both sides of the strait should cherish each other's values and way of life, and that if a war broke out it would be "unbearable for the Chinese nation".

Xi responded that although their systems were different, as long as Taiwan and mainland China shared a common national identity, with the 1992 consensus as the foundation for political ties, then they could sit down to resolve conflicts and build mutual trust, according to Ma.

The former Taiwanese leader also said Xi had a rare face-to-face talk with the students, listening to their thoughts and answering questions.

"I believe this demonstrates the highest sincerity and goodwill towards Taiwan," Ma said, adding that the students had told him that Xi "seemed like a caring elder, patiently sharing life experiences with them, leaving them with unforgettable memories".

There was no immediate response to Ma's remarks from Lai or his office. But the DPP said last week that Ma's views did not reflect those of the Taiwanese public and that cross-strait dialogue and interaction should be based on "equality and dignity" with "neither side subordinating to the other".

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council said a survey it conducted this month found that nearly 80 per cent of Taiwanese disagreed with Beijing's use of the 1992 consensus as the political foundation for cross-strait dialogue.

### Chinese President Xi meets former Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou on pro-unification visit

10 April 2024, [Spectrum News](#)

Chinese President Xi Jinping met with former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou in Beijing Wednesday in a bid to promote unification between the sides that separated amid civil war in 1949.

Ma left office almost two decades ago and was largely excluded from the opposition Nationalist Party's failed campaign to retake the presidency in January, a concession to the electorate's strong opposition to political unification with China and politicians seen as willing to compromise Taiwan's security.

He follows a long line of politicians from the Nationalists, also known as the KMT, who have been invited to China by its authoritarian one-party government and given VIP treatment on visits around the country.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be annexed by force if necessary. Beijing sends navy ships and warplanes around the island on a daily basis in hopes of wearing down Taiwan's defenses and intimidating the population.

"The people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are all Chinese. There is no dispute that cannot be resolved, there is no problem that cannot be discussed, and no force can separate us," Xi told Ma.

"Differences in systems cannot change the fact that both sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to the same country and nation," he added.

Ma responded that a new war between the sides would be "an unbearable burden for the Chinese nation."

"The Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait will definitely have enough wisdom to handle cross-strait disputes peacefully and avoid conflicts," Ma said. Independence leaning president-elect Lai Ching-te of the Democratic Progressive Party won the January election handily and his vice president-elect Bi-khim Hsiao has been visiting nations friendly to Taiwan in Europe and elsewhere ahead of taking office.

Ma's 11-day trip, ostensibly at the head of a student delegation, underlines continued interactions in education, business and culture despite Beijing's threat to use military force against the self-governing island democracy to achieve unification.

Toward the end of his second term in 2015, Ma held a historic meeting with Xi in Singapore, which has close contacts with both sides. The meeting — the first between the leaders of China and Taiwan in more than half a century — produced few tangible outcomes, and Ma's Nationalist Party lost the next presidential election to Tsai Ing-wen of the DPP.

Lai Ching-te, currently vice president, is despised by Beijing for his opposition to unification. The Nationalists recovered a narrow majority in the legislature but their influence on foreign policy and other national issues remains limited.

Taiwan has been boosting military relations with allies such as the U.S. and Japan while maintaining close economic ties with the Chinese mainland.

## **RFI: Taiwan Rejects China's Relief Aid After Earthquake**

05 April 2024, [RFI](#)

Following the magnitude 7.4 earthquake that struck Taiwan on the morning of April 3rd, *Radio France Internationale (RFI)* reported that Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council quickly rejected aid offered by mainland China, saying it was not needed.

Analysts explained that Beijing's aid always comes with conditions attached and is not a true gesture of goodwill. Some suggested that, instead of providing aid, it would be better for the mainland to stop interfering with the Taiwanese government's disaster relief effort.

The report stated that "China has been unwilling to give up the threat of force to expand its control over Taiwan, and the Taiwanese people are naturally highly suspicious of China's intentions." The article mentioned that mainland China blocked the United Nations from providing much-needed assistance to Taiwan 25 years ago when it suffered "The Great 921 Earthquake." In recent years, mainland aircraft and warships frequently disturb the areas surrounding Taiwan. This trend is only intensifying. Because of these ongoing military threats, people in Taiwan are highly suspicious of China's intentions.

Some scholars expressed the belief that China may have anticipated Taiwan's reaction. The argument is as follows: When Beijing made an offer that was very likely to be rejected, they were not actually trying to help; they were setting a trap to embarrass Taiwan for rejecting aid that appears to have been offered in goodwill.

## **Taiwan detects 30 Chinese military aircraft, 9 navy vessels around nation**

03 April 2024, [Business Standard](#)

Taiwan Defence Ministry detected 30 Chinese military aircraft and nine navy vessels operating around its nation between Tuesday 6 am and Wednesday 6 am, Taiwan Ministry of National Defence said.

It added that 20 Chinese aircraft entered its northern middle line and Taiwan's southwest air defence identification zone (ADIZ). "30 PLA aircraft and 9 PLAN vessels operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 20 of the aircraft entered Taiwan's northern, middle line, and SW ADIZ. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and employed appropriate force to respond," Taiwan Ministry of National Defence posted on X. Taiwan tracked seven Chinese naval vessels and six military aircraft around the nation amid escalating cross-strait tensions on Tuesday, Taiwan News reported. In an

official post on 'X,' Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) said, "6 PLA aircraft and 7 PLAN vessels around Taiwan were detected by 6 am (UTC+8) today. 2 of the aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait. #ROCArmedForces have monitored the situation and employed appropriate forces to respond."

Notably, in March, Taiwan tracked 359 Chinese military aircraft and 204 naval vessels, according to Taiwan News.

Since September 2020, China has increased its use of gray zone tactics by incrementally increasing the number of military aircraft and naval ships operating around Taiwan.

Gray zone tactics are defined as "an effort or series of efforts beyond steady-state deterrence and assurance that attempts to achieve one's security objectives without resorting to direct and sizable use of force." Meanwhile, the Taiwanese military condemned the filming by drones by Chinese netizens on the outlying island of Erdan near Kinmen on March 31, Taiwan News reported.

Some reports circulated online suggesting that unmanned aerial vehicles had captured footage of military movements on the Taiwanese-held island, within view of the Chinese city of Xiamen.

The Kinmen Defence Command said local officers could take appropriate measures based on the threat level the drones posed.

The military blamed some Chinese netizens for the provocative behaviour, which could easily escalate into a serious incident.

### **Ex-Taiwanese President Ma visits China to help build social and cultural links**

01 April 2024, [ABC News](#)

Former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou is visiting China to help build social and cultural links on a trip that might include a meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping despite heightened tensions.

Former Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou is visiting China to help build social and cultural links on a trip that might include a meeting with Chinese leader Xi Jinping despite heightened tensions. Ma left Taipei on Monday with a student group on an 11-day trip that underlines continued interactions in education, business and culture despite Beijing's threat to use military force against the self-governing island democracy to achieve unification. Toward the end of his second term in 2015, Ma held a historic meeting with Xi in Singapore, which has close contacts with both sides. The meeting — the first between the leaders of China and Taiwan in more than half a century — produced few tangible outcomes and Ma's Nationalist Party lost the next presidential election to

Tsai Ing-wen of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party.

Current Vice President Lai Ching-te, despised by Beijing for his opposition to unification, was elected as Tsai's successor in January, although the Nationalists recovered a narrow majority in the legislature.

Ma's itinerary includes a visit to Beijing, where there is heavy speculation he might meet with Xi, who says he remains open to Taiwanese politicians who proclaim that the island and the mainland, which split during a civil war in 1949, belong to a common Chinese nation. Taiwan's official Central News Agency quoted Hsiao Hsu-tsen, who directs Ma's foundation, as saying he hopes Ma will have the chance to meet with "an old friend," but gave no details.

Taiwanese are largely opposed to political unification with China, and the island is boosting military relations with allies such as the U.S. and Japan while maintaining close economic ties with the mainland

## **China - Xinjiang**

### **UN expert states Xinjiang and Tibet situations are components of Chinese Colonisation process**

19 April 2024, [MyInd](#)

The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, in partnership with the World Uyghur Congress and Uyghur Human Rights Project, convened a conference in New York titled 'Beyond Concentration Camps: Forced Assimilation and China's Colonial Boarding Schools' to discuss the cultural assimilation of the Uyghur community in East Turkestan.

Social activists, human rights advocates, representatives, and delegates from the World Uyghur Congress, as well as the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity, a US-based social organisation, were among the speakers at the conference.

During the press conference, Fernand De Varennes, former UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, highlighted China's strategic efforts to systematically dismantle Uyghur civilisation and culture through its implementation of residential schools.

In his statement, De Varennes remarked that the situation in China, including Xinjiang and Tibet, extends beyond mere human rights violations to encompass a systematic process of colonisation, erasure, and elimination of cultures and peoples.

He suggested that Han nationalism drives this process, leading to significant breaches of international human rights standards, particularly affecting Tibetans, Uyghurs, and potentially other minorities.

While emphasising the UN's actions concerning cultural destruction, the former UN Special

Rapporteur noted that several independent experts, including the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, have published numerous reports, communications, and responses addressing allegations of extensive violations. Many individuals within the UN community express deep concern regarding the magnitude and severity of the human rights abuses occurring.

He mentioned the huge internment of between one and two million Uyghurs and other minorities in large arbitrary detentions. This is possibly the largest detention of civilians since the Second World War. It affected around 10 to 20 percent of the adult population in Xinjiang at the time.

De Varennes highlighted that Chinese authorities in Tibet and Xinjiang have implemented systems subjecting Tibetans and Uyghurs to forced labour, potentially amounting to a modern form of slavery. He expressed shock at the scale of this phenomenon, citing the work of Tomoya Obokata, a Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery.

The UN Special Rapporteur highlighted China's state-run boarding school system in Xinjiang, which fails to educate children in their mother tongue and separates a large number of mainly Uyghur children from their families. He finds this practice surprising, shocking, and unacceptable, resembling a modern form of systematic cultural genocide.

According to the former UN Rapporteur, what's happening in Xinjiang and Tibet is not just massive human rights violations, but intentional colonisation. Allegations include sterilisation of Uyghur and minority women, the banning certain Muslim names, and restricting Islamic teachings. Books on Uyghur culture and literature are banned, even poetry books in Uyghur.

Destruction of mosques, historical sites, and cemeteries is part of erasing the people's presence systematically. This is deliberate, aiming to erase civilisation, people, and their history from the territory.

### China bans Uyghurs from using social media apps

18 April 2024, [RFA](#)

Authorities in Xinjiang have banned Uyghurs from using social media apps including Chinese-owned TikTok and tools to circumvent censorship, according to a video released from Chinese police, in what experts say could be the beginning of another major crackdown on the region's 11 million mostly Muslim Uyghurs.

A video notice about the ban was released April 8 by the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, a

state-run economic and paramilitary organization also known as Bingtuan that has played a key role in suppressing the Uyghurs.

Violators face arrest, a fine of 15,000 yuan, or US\$2,100, and a 40-point deduction under China's social credit system, which affects people's access to credit and business opportunities, according to the video.



*The main gate of a Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps building in Manas County, northwestern China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, April 17, 2021. (Charlie Qi via Wikipedia)*

In addition to TikTok, people are forbidden from downloading and using X, formerly Twitter, and YouTube, and buying and selling on the cryptocurrency platform Bitcoin, it said.

The announcement "suggests a significant likelihood of another round of mass oppression by China," said Ilshat Hassan Kokbore, vice chairman of the executive committee of the World Uyghur Congress.

Bingtuan police also warned against using virtual private networks, or VPNs, or server accelerator cards, which get around China's "Great Firewall" of government internet censorship.

Authorities are also broadcasting the warning against using foreign websites and apps across radio stations, televisions and social media platforms in Xinjiang, said a foreign businessman who works in the region, but declined to be named for fear of retribution.

Chinese police are conducting impromptu checks of phones in Uyghur homes and hotels, leading to abductions, he said.

Pivotal role in oppression

Bingtuan police and armed security forces participated in the mass arrests and detentions of Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in internment camps and prisons that began around 2017, which the United States and some Western parliaments have labeled a genocide.

A December 2023 report by the Uyghur Human Rights Project on the police surveillance structure in Xinjiang identifies the People's Armed Police and the Bingtuan as the primary perpetrators of the Chinese Communist Party's genocide against the Uyghurs.

The latest ban came after a special meeting recently convened by Xinjiang's Communist Party Committee, which stressed the need for "strictly maintaining secrecy related to Xinjiang."

Sophie Richardson, former director of China affairs at Human Rights Watch, said the new ban could indicate the failure of Chinese policies in Xinjiang.

"If the Chinese government really thought its policies were working well in the region, these kinds of threats and constraints simply wouldn't exist," she said.

Surveillance apps

The new cyber restrictions are nothing new in Xinjiang. By 2016, Chinese police had forced people in the region to install government surveillance apps on their cellphones and computers.

The following year, the Chinese government began a large-scale arrest operation based on WeChat activity records of Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic groups.

According to news reports, China has amassed comprehensive information on Uyghurs in a large database and can monitor and track them around the clock.

Geoffrey Cain, a senior research fellow and policy director of the Tech Integrity Project and author of the book "The Perfect Police State," said crackdowns always "start with apps," but he added that the CCP itself has mastered the use of apps to collect data on China's entire population.

"They learned to do it with the use of concentration camps, and to put people in those concentration camps they used mass data gathering from their apps," he told RFA.

Chinese public security authorities have required Uyghurs with personal computers and smartphones to install "anti-fraud" spyware on devices.

Now if someone tries to download foreign social media apps such as X or to use a VPN, the software immediately alerts police, who have the authority to freeze users' bank accounts and terminate their phone service, Cain said.

Forcing people in Xinjiang and the rest of China to install spy apps shows that Chinese authorities are worried about political stability and they want to create a total security state by seeing "every person's thinking, every person's ideology," he said.

Denying the Uyghur genocide

Kokbore pointed out that Chinese government officials widely use social media platforms such as TikTok, X and Facebook to deny the Uyghur genocide.

"China is putting efforts to conceal the ethnic genocide in the Uyghur region by tightly controlling information and punishing Uyghurs arbitrarily," he said.

Kokbore also noted the presence of X accounts with Uyghur profile photos that promote the Chinese government's narrative of Uyghurs living happy lives

under Chinese policies. Chinese reporters then use such platforms to conceal the atrocities.

Some U.S. lawmakers and government officials have determined that TikTok, a subsidiary of Chinese company ByteDance, poses a threat to U.S. national security.

The U.S. House of Representatives on March 13 passed legislation that will ban TikTok in the United States unless its parent company can find a buyer for it. To become law, the bill must clear the Senate, where other efforts to ban the short-video app have stalled.

Translated by RFA Uyghur. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.

### C House Reps urge crack down on companies benefiting from Chinese forced labor

17 April 2024, [AXIOS](#)



Reps. Mike Gallagher and Raja Krishnamoorthi talk with reporters in the U.S. Capitol on March 13. Photo: Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty Images

Two House members urged the State Department Wednesday to step up its diplomatic efforts to ensure companies that benefit from the forced labor of Uyghurs in China can't access global markets.

Why it matters: The U.S. has sought to crack down on companies believed to be complicit in the Chinese government's human rights abuses towards Uyghur Muslims and other minorities in Xinjiang province.

Now, the leaders of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party are calling for the U.S. to get allies on board as well.

The big picture: Last month, the European Council and European Parliament struck a provisional deal to ban products made with forced labor from being imported into the EU market.

Yet the select committee has learned that certain EU members are considering voting against the ban, committee chair Mike Gallagher (R-Wisc.) and ranking member Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-Ill.) wrote in a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken Wednesday.

Failing to pass the ban would mean products made by Chinese "state-sponsored forced labor programs will continue to have unfettered access to European markets."

They will also have a higher likelihood of entering the U.S. via Europe, they added.

State of play: "We therefore urge the State Department to intensify and elevate its global diplomatic efforts to address PRC state-sponsored forced labor programs," the two lawmakers wrote.

Initial efforts should "prioritize engagement" with EU partners, including Germany and Italy, ahead of a prospective vote on the import ban.

The lawmakers gave the State Department until April 30 to answer a series of questions regarding their efforts to engage allies on the topic.

Zoom out: The U.S. passed the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA) in Dec. 2021, banning all imports from Xinjiang unless companies can prove with "clear and convincing evidence" that the products are not made with forced labor.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers last year raised calls for increased transparency around the enforcement of UFLPA, following reports that products from Xinjiang were still coming into the U.S.

The Trump administration in Jan. 2021 declared China's campaign of mass internment, forced labor and forced sterilization of Uyghurs and other minorities in Xinjiang to be a genocide.

### US lawmakers relaunch Uyghur caucus

17 April 2024, [RFA](#)

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*Uyghur activists present two U.S. lawmakers with accolades for their long support for Uyghurs on April 16, 2024, at the Capitol building in Washington. From left to right: Nury Turkel, commissioner of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, Rishat Abbas, chairman of the Uyghur Academy International, Rep. Chris Smith, (R-NJ), Elfidar Iltebir, president of the Uyghur American Association, Rushan Abbas, executive director of the Campaign for Uyghurs, Rep. Tom Suozzi (D-NY), Omer Kanat, executive director of the Uyghur Human Rights Project, Dolkun Isa, president of the World Uyghur Congress, and Ablikim Idris, executive director of the Center for Uyghur Studies.*

The Congressional Uyghur Caucus is back.

Though the caucus never disbanded, the activities of the bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers slowed to a trickle after its chair, Rep. Tom Suozzi, a Democrat from New York, retired from his district, which Republican Rep. George Santos then won in the 2022 midterms. Shortly after his shock win, Santos' personal biography was proved to be a series of lies by a New York Times report. He was then expelled from the House of Representatives in December, less than a year after taking his seat, which paved the way for Suozzi to return.

The former attorney said he was pleased to be back at work.

“We just do not hear about the Uyghurs enough, and I am excited to come back to Congress to work with you to make sure that we let more people know what is happening,” he said at an event Tuesday on Capitol Hill relaunching the Congressional Uyghur Caucus.

The most pressing priority of the revamped caucus, Suozzi said, would be to more widely spread awareness of the plight of Uyghurs in China’s far-west, whom the U.S. government says are subject to an ongoing genocide and are often detained in forced-labor camps.

Beijing, though, says the Muslim minority were only taken to vocational training centers, most of which it says are now shuttered.

“We have to figure out how, as a team, can we make this part of the national conversation, and the global conversation?” Suozzi said on Tuesday. “There’s no question of the abuse. There’s no question about how horrific it is. There’s no question that it’s being done.” “There’s no question it would rise to the level of the things that would most offend most people – if they were educated about it,” he added. “but we can’t get it to be part of everyday conversation.”

‘Looking askance’

Rep. Chris Smith, a Republican from New Jersey who chairs the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and will be a co-chair for the Congressional Uyghur Caucus, said the caucus had a lot of work left over from when it was last working at full steam.

“To think that, as we meet,” Smith said, “there’s a genocide going on this very minute.”

He accused both the White House and the State Department of “looking askance” at the genocide when it served their diplomatic ends, such as the current warming of ties with Beijing.

“That’s usually both parties: Once they get the White House, human rights become an asterisk on a bunch of talking points when they meet with foreign leaders like [Chinese President] Xi Jinping,” he said. “It’s brought up, but it’s not brought up in a way that is meaningful.”

Smith said he wanted to see the caucus push the passage of the Uyghur Policy Act, which would force the U.S. State Department to place a Uyghur speaker in every American consulate in China and include Uyghurs in outreach programs in Muslim countries.

He also said the Senate should take up a bill that passed the House in a 414-2 vote last year that would place sanctions on Chinese officials involved in forced organ harvesting, which Uyghur activists say is rife in far-western Xinjiang region where most of the minority live.

“The Uyghurs are suffering from this in a horrible way,” Smith said. “We’ve got to get it done. I’m almost at a point of outrage.”

He added the bill was now “sitting idly languishing, collecting dust over in the U.S. Senate,” and that he did not believe organ harvesting “gets raised” properly by diplomats in meetings with Chinese officials.

Also attending the event was Rep. Jennifer Wexton, a Democrat from Virginia whose district in the state’s north is home to many Uyghurs.

Wexton, who was previously one of the most outspoken members of the caucus, is now set to retire at the end of the current congressional term after being debilitated by progressive supra-nuclear palsy, a disease she described as “like Parkinson’s [disease] on steroids.”

Using an assisted speaking app on her phone, Wexton said she hoped the revamped caucus was able to pass legislation that would help end the “gut-wrenching” situation taking place in the Xinjiang region.

“We have made great strides in this fight,” she said. “But as all of you know, it is far from over. While I may not be serving in Congress for much longer, I want you to know that I will not give up this fight.”

Edited by Malcolm Foster.

The story was updated to correct Nury Turkel’s title in the photo caption.

## China finds foreign support for Xinjiang policies as region seeks to boost economic ties

11 April 2024, Yuanyue Dang, [SCMP](#)



Foreign diplomats attend a conference hosted by Xinjiang officials in Beijing on Wednesday. The event coincided with Eid ul-Fitr, the Muslim festival that marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. Photo: Xinhua

- Envoys from 49 countries attend event hosted by Xinjiang officials, with many saying they hope to strengthen cooperation under belt and road strategy
- Xinjiang aims to expand its international influence as it faces allegations of human rights abuses and forced labour – accusations Beijing has denied

Ambassadors from more than 20 countries showed support for China’s policies in Xinjiang Uygur

autonomous region and vowed to develop closer economic ties with the far western area as it seeks to expand its international influence amid human rights abuse allegations.

While attending a reception in Beijing on Wednesday, the ambassadors from South Africa, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Iran, Syria and Turkey told Xinjiang authorities that they hoped to strengthen economic ties with the region.

More than 50 diplomats from 49 countries, including 21 ambassadors, attended the reception. It was the largest of several similar events organised by Xinjiang officials in recent years.

The most senior Chinese official present was Xinjiang Communist Party chief Ma Xingrui, who is also a member of the Politburo, the party's elite decision-making body.

The event coincided with Eid ul-Fitr, the Muslim festival that marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

Xinjiang is home to 25.85 million people, 14.93 million of whom are members of ethnic minority groups, including the Muslim Uygurs and Kazakhs.

Beijing has been accused of human rights violations and forced labour in Xinjiang – accusations it has denied. The Xinjiang government has become more proactive in recent years in promoting the region's economic development, especially its status as a core area of China's Belt and Road Initiative, in the hopes of improving its international image.

Turkish ambassador to China Ismail Hakki Musa said that Xinjiang, as a core part of the belt and road strategy, could play a role in the Middle Corridor, also called the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), an Ankara-backed Eurasian trade route.

China's Uygurs, who speak a Turkic language, share cultural and linguistic ties with Turkish Muslims. Relations between Beijing and Ankara were once strained over Xinjiang but have eased in recent years as a result of closer economic relations.

Kazakhstan's ambassador to China, Shakhmat Nuryshev, said Xinjiang had a "special place" in his country's ties with Beijing. Around 1.6 million ethnic Kazakhs live in Xinjiang.

Central Asian countries are a priority for Xinjiang authorities in developing external relations.

These countries, most of which became independent in the early 1990s with the collapse of the Soviet Union, were once blamed as the source of separatist sentiments in Xinjiang because of their shared cultural similarities with ethnic minority groups there.

However, China's ties with Central Asia have warmed over the past decade as Xinjiang's security situation has improved and countries in the region have played a growing role in the belt and road – Beijing's

ambitious plan to build global trade and infrastructure links.

In a speech at the reception, Syrian ambassador to China Muhammad Hassanein Khalil Khaddam decried the "lies of some Western countries", referring to allegations of human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

Syria has increased its cooperation with China in the face of Western sanctions as Beijing has strengthened ties with Moscow, an ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Assad travelled to China in September – his first visit since the Syrian civil war broke out in 2011.

Mohsen Bakhtiyar, Iran's ambassador to China, said his country "links China and the West through Xinjiang", adding that there were great opportunities for cooperation between Iran and Xinjiang in areas such as energy and minerals.

Pakistan's ambassador to China, Khalil-ur-Rahman Hashmi, said Islamabad hoped to deepen cooperation with Xinjiang in trade, investment and other areas. In recent years, China and Pakistan have also strengthened their cooperation in counterterrorism.

The ambassador from South Africa also made a speech and envoys from Cuba, Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Dominica, Georgia, Qatar and Serbia attended the event.

Xinjiang has sent multiple official delegations abroad in the past two years, and the region has frequently hosted foreign envoys, religious representatives and media figures.

In 2021, Xinjiang hosted more than 40 envoys from over 30 African countries in the regional capital of Urumqi.

In late January, Xinjiang for the first time invited foreign diplomats to attend the annual sessions of the region's legislature and political consultative conference in Urumqi – its most important political event of the year. The diplomats who attended were mainly from countries that belong to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a China-led regional security and economic grouping.

Wednesday's reception was also attended by several senior Chinese officials responsible for Xinjiang, religious and foreign affairs as well as officials from Xinjiang in charge of ideology and foreign affairs.

Erkin Tuniyaz, Xinjiang's regional government chairman and one of the officials sanctioned by the US for alleged human rights abuses, said the region had protected religious freedom, particularly the "healthy and orderly development" of Islam.

Chen Xiaodong, China's vice-minister of foreign affairs, said Beijing would "actively promote" Xinjiang's opening to the outside world. He added that he hoped the envoys would promote Xinjiang to the world and resist "lies about forced labour".



## With feasts and patrols, China tries to keep Uyghurs from fasting

05 April 2024, Shohret Hoshur, [RFA](#)



*Uyghurs and other members of the faithful pray during services at the Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar in northwestern China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, as seen during a government organized visit for foreign journalists, April 19, 2021.*

During Ramadan, Chinese authorities have been using a mix of festivals and surveillance to keep the mostly Muslim Uyghurs in the far western region of Xinjiang from fasting, praying and observing the Muslim holy month that ends next week.

In the city of Atush, officials told Radio Free Asia that they organized arts events and outdoor feasts and distributed free food during the month. They also held communal meetings in the early evenings to coincide with sundown, when Muslim families typically gather to eat after the daylong fast in a practice called *iftar*. Police in the northwestern city of Ghulja conducted street patrols and home inspections to see if residents were fasting. They also banned residents from gathering on the streets to prevent them from meeting for dinner together.

"It is prohibited to do *iftar* together and prayer together," a police officer in Ghulja told RFA. "We tell them fasting is not allowed, We also pay attention [to see] if they are visiting their relatives during *iftar*."

In the regional capital Urumqi, a traffic police officer said designated officers had been tasked with monitoring taxi drivers to ensure they were not fasting or praying during the month.

A flurry of social media videos coming out of Xinjiang this month showed Uyghurs singing Chinese songs and gathered around outdoor tables with beer bottles on top. RFA could not independently verify when the videos had been taken or who had shot them, but their intent seemed to be to promote eating, dancing and entertaining – not prayer and fasting.

### Squelching Islam

Due to Chinese censorship and severe restrictions placed on Xinjiang residents talking with journalists, it

is nearly impossible to obtain candid comments from Uyghurs on the ground about these events.

But Uyghur advocates and experts outside China say that for years Beijing has been trying to restrict and discourage Uyghurs and other Turkic minorities in the region from observing Ramadan and practicing Islam in general – all in the name of fighting religious extremism and terrorism.

Chinese authorities began banning Muslims in Xinjiang from fasting during Ramadan in 2017, when they began arbitrarily detaining an estimated 1.7 million Uyghurs in "re-education" camps amid larger efforts to diminish their culture, language and religion.

The restriction was partially relaxed in 2021 and 2022, allowing people over 65 to fast, and police reduced the number of home searches and street patrol activities. But in 2023, authorities ordered all Muslims in Xinjiang to not fast and even used spies to report on those who did.

"The Chinese Communist Party has been aggressively carrying out its campaign of eliminating the religious beliefs of the Uyghur people during the holy month of Ramadan," said Ablikim Idris, executive director of the Washington-based Center for Uyghur Studies.

"During this month of prayer and fasting, Chinese authorities have been organizing political indoctrination sessions, singing and dancing, as well as other entertainment for Uyghurs in order to eradicate their faith in Islam from their hearts," he said.

"Their goal is to trample on the millennial-long faith of Uyghurs and turn them into a people without God and religion."

### Evening gatherings about social order

A police officer in Atush contacted by RFA Uyghur said authorities have been tasked with coordinating various activities and events – some overseeing security, while others perform surveillance or organize art shows.

We "have been working tirelessly, without any breaks, operating 24 hours a day," she said.

The security director of a village in Upper Atush told Radio Free Asia that since the beginning of Ramadan, residents have had to gather at the village meeting hall in the early evenings.

"We have been advertising legal rules and holding weekly study events for the community," he said.

During events attended by city and political officials, there were no explicit speeches banning Ramadan or fasting. Instead, lectures were delivered on maintaining social order and stability and eating meals regularly to maintain one's health, some officials said. Officials also gave farmers agricultural training until about 7 p.m., as well as offered health advice and explained the importance of loyalty to China and how stability contributes to its prosperity, he said.

When RFA asked officials and police about whether distributing free food during Ramadan had prompted discontent among Uyghurs, they said that community “awareness” had increased, thereby negating any dissatisfaction.

They attributed this “progress” to the significant role played by the Chinese Communist Party and the government in shaping public sentiment.

“I didn’t observe any disagreement over the food distribution,” said a village security chief.

“I believe there are no longer people with outdated ideologies,” she said. “Everyone has embraced progressive ideals, thanks to the efforts of our party and nation. People accept modernity and embrace advanced ideologies.”

*Translated by RFA Uyghur. Edited by Roseanne Gerin and Malcolm Foster.*

## CHINA AND US

### Antony Blinken begins key China visit as tensions rise over new U.S. foreign aid bill

25 April 2024, [The Hindu](#)

*Blinken arrived in Shanghai on April 24 just hours after the Senate vote on the long-stalled legislation*

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has begun a critical trip to China armed with a strengthened diplomatic hand following Senate approval of a foreign aid package that will provide billions of dollars in assistance to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan as well as force TikTok’s China-based parent company to sell the social media platform — all areas of contention between Washington and Beijing.

Blinken arrived in Shanghai on Wednesday just hours after the Senate vote on the long-stalled legislation and shortly before President Joe Biden is expected to sign it into law to demonstrate U.S. resolve in defending its allies and partners. Passage of the bill will add further complications to an already complex relationship that has been strained by disagreements over numerous global and regional disputes.

Still, the fact that Blinken is making the trip — shortly after a conversation between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping, a similar visit to China by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and a call between the U.S. and Chinese defense chiefs — is a sign the two sides are at least willing to discuss their differences.

Of primary interest to China, the bill sets aside \$8 billion to counter Chinese threats in Taiwan and the broader Indo-Pacific and gives China’s ByteDance nine months to sell TikTok with a possible three-month extension if a sale is in progress. China has railed against U.S. assistance to Taiwan, which it regards as a

renegade province, and immediately condemned the move as a dangerous provocation. It also strongly opposes efforts to force TikTok’s sale.

The bill also allots \$26 billion in wartime assistance to Israel and humanitarian relief to Palestinians in Gaza, and \$61 billion for Ukraine to defend itself from Russia’s invasion. The Biden administration has been disappointed in China’s response to the war in Gaza and has complained loudly that Chinese support for Russia’s military-industrial sector has allowed Moscow to subvert Western sanctions and ramp up attacks on Ukraine.

Even before Blinken landed in Shanghai — where he will have meetings on Thursday before traveling to Beijing — China’s Taiwan Affairs Office slammed the assistance to Taipei, saying it “seriously violates” U.S. commitments to China, “sends a wrong signal to the Taiwan independence separatist forces” and pushes the self-governing island republic into a “dangerous situation.”

China and the United States are the major players in the Indo-Pacific and Washington has become increasingly alarmed by Beijing’s growing aggressiveness in recent years toward Taiwan and Southeast Asian countries with which it has significant territorial and maritime disputes in the South China Sea.

The U.S. has strongly condemned Chinese military exercises threatening Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a renegade province and has vowed to reunify with the mainland by force if necessary. Successive U.S. administrations have steadily boosted military support and sales for Taiwan, much to Chinese anger.

A senior State Department official said last week that Blinken would “underscore, both in private and public, America’s abiding interest in maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. We think that is vitally important for the region and the world.”

In the South China Sea, the U.S. and others have become increasingly concerned by provocative Chinese actions in and around disputed areas.

In particular, the U.S. has voiced objections to what it says are Chinese attempts to thwart legitimate maritime activities by others in the sea, notably the Philippines and Vietnam. That was a major topic of concern this month when Biden held a three-way summit with the prime minister of Japan and the president of the Philippines.

On Ukraine, which U.S. officials say will be a primary topic of conversation during Blinken’s visit, the Biden administration said that Chinese support has allowed Russia to largely reconstitute its defense industrial base, affecting not only the war in Ukraine but posing a threat to broader European security.

“If China purports on the one hand to want good relations with Europe and other countries, it can’t on

the other hand be fueling what is the biggest threat to European security since the end of the Cold War," Blinken said last week.

China says it has the right to trade with Russia and accuses the U.S. of fanning the flames by arming and funding Ukraine. "It is extremely hypocritical and irresponsible for the U.S. to introduce a large-scale aid bill for Ukraine while making groundless accusations against normal economic and trade exchanges between China and Russia," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Tuesday.

On the Middle East, U.S. officials, from Biden on down, have repeatedly appealed to China to use any leverage it may have with Iran to prevent Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza from spiraling into a wider regional conflict.

While China appears to have been generally receptive to such calls — particularly because it depends heavily on oil imports from Iran and other Mideast nations — tensions have steadily increased since the beginning of the Gaza war in October and more recent direct strikes and counterstrikes between Israel and Iran.

Blinken has pushed for China to take a more active stance in pressing Iran not to escalate tensions in the Middle East. He has spoken to his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, several times urging China to tell Iran to restrain the proxy groups it has supported in the region, including Hamas, Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis and Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria.

The senior State Department official said Blinken would reiterate the U.S. interest in China using "whatever channels or influence it has to try to convey the need for restraint to all parties, including Iran."

The U.S. and China are also at deep odds over human rights in China's western Xinjiang region, Tibet and Hong Kong, as well as the fate of several American citizens that the State Department says have been "wrongfully detained" by Chinese authorities, and the supply of precursors to make the synthetic opioid fentanyl that is responsible for the deaths of thousands of Americans.

China has repeatedly rejected the American criticism of its rights record as improper interference in its internal affairs. Yet, Blinken will again raise these issues, according to the State Department official.

Another department official, who also spoke on condition of anonymity to preview Blinken's private talks with Chinese officials, said China had made efforts to rein in the export of materials that traffickers use to make fentanyl but that more needs to be done. The two sides agreed last year to set up a working group to look into ways to combat the surge of production of fentanyl precursors in China and their export abroad. U.S. officials say they believe they had made some limited progress on cracking down on the

illicit industry but many producers had found ways to get around new restrictions.

"We need to see continued and sustained progress," the official said, adding that "more regular law enforcement" against Chinese precursor producers "would send a strong signal of China's commitment to address this issue."

### **US blacklists four Chinese tech apps for helping military in China**

13 April 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

Amid escalating tensions between the United States and China, the US Commerce Department has taken action by blacklisting four Chinese companies for their alleged involvement in supplying artificial intelligence (AI) chips to China's military modernization efforts. This move comes as part of the US government's efforts to prevent sensitive American technology from being used for military purposes in China.

The blacklisted companies, including Linkzol (Beijing) Technology Co, Xi'an Like Innovative Information Technology Co, Beijing Anwise Technology Co, and SITONHOLY (Tianjin) Co, were among 11 additions to the Commerce Department Entity List this week. Being placed on this list makes it significantly challenging for these companies to access American goods and technology.

According to Kevin Kurland, an export enforcement official, the banned companies were involved in acquiring US AI chips for Chinese military applications, prompting the US to impose restrictions on exports of advanced semiconductors and chip-making equipment to China.

China, however, vehemently denied the allegations, with Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning dismissing them as attempts to "contain and suppress" Chinese companies. China vowed to take "necessary steps" to safeguard its interests in response to the US actions.

Additionally, the US imposed export restrictions on five other companies accused of aiding drone production for Russia's involvement in Ukraine and Iranian attacks in the Red Sea. Among these companies was Jiangxi Xintuo Enterprise Co, a Chinese firm allegedly supporting Russia's drone program, along with a network of companies supplying drone components to Iran.

China condemned the US measures, arguing that they disrupt normal economic cooperation with Russia. As tensions continue to simmer between the US and China, these latest developments underscore the complexities of economic and geopolitical relations between the two global powers.

## US-China competition to field military drone swarms could fuel global arms race

12 April 2024, [AP News](#)

As their rivalry intensifies, U.S. and Chinese military planners are gearing up for a new kind of warfare in which squadrons of air and sea drones equipped with artificial intelligence work together like a swarm of bees to overwhelm an enemy.

The planners envision a scenario in which hundreds, even thousands of the machines engage in coordinated battle. A single controller might oversee dozens of drones. Some would scout, others attack. Some would be able to pivot to new objectives in the middle of a mission based on prior programming rather than a direct order.

The world's only AI superpowers are engaged in an arms race for swarming drones that is reminiscent of the Cold War, except drone technology will be far more difficult to contain than nuclear weapons. Because software drives the drones' swarming abilities, it could be relatively easy and cheap for rogue nations and militants to acquire their own fleets of killer robots.

The Pentagon is pushing urgent development of inexpensive, expendable drones as a deterrent against China acting on its territorial claim on Taiwan. Washington says it has no choice but to keep pace with Beijing. Chinese officials say AI-enabled weapons are inevitable so they, too, must have them. The unchecked spread of swarm technology "could lead to more instability and conflict around the world," said Margarita Konaev, an analyst with Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology.

As the undisputed leaders in the field, Washington and Beijing are best equipped to set an example by putting limits on military uses of drone swarms. But their intense competition, China's military aggression in the South China Sea and persistent tensions over Taiwan make the prospect of cooperation look dim.

The idea is not new. The United Nations has tried for more than a decade to advance drone non-proliferation efforts that could include limits such as forbidding the targeting of civilians or banning the use of swarms for ethnic cleansing.

### MILITARY CONTRACTS OFFER CLUES

Drones have been a priority for both powers for years, and each side has kept its advances secret, so it's unclear which country might have an edge.

A 2023 Georgetown study of AI-related military spending found that more than a third of known contracts issued by both U.S. and Chinese military services over eight months in 2020 were for intelligent uncrewed systems.

The Pentagon sought bids in January for small, unmanned maritime "interceptors." The specifications

reflect the military's ambition: The drones must be able to transit hundreds of miles of "contested waterspace," work in groups in waters without GPS, carry 1,000-pound payloads, attack hostile craft at 40 mph and execute "complex autonomous behaviors" to adapt to a target's evasive tactics.

It's not clear how many drones a single person would control. A spokesman for the defense secretary declined to say, but a recently published Pentagon-backed study offers a clue: A single operator supervised a swarm of more than 100 cheap air and land drones in late 2021 in an urban warfare exercise at an Army training site at Fort Campbell, Tennessee.

The CEO of a company developing software to allow multiple drones to collaborate said in an interview that the technology is bounding ahead.

"We're enabling a single operator to direct right now half a dozen," said Lorenz Meier of Auterion, which is working on the technology for the U.S. military and its allies. He said that number is expected to increase to dozens and within a year to hundreds.

Not to be outdone, China's military claimed last year that dozens of aerial drones "self-healed" after jamming cut their communications. An official documentary said they regrouped, switched to self-guidance and completed a search-and-destroy mission unaided, detonating explosive-laden drones on a target.

In justifying the push for drone swarms, China hawks in Washington offer this scenario: Beijing invades Taiwan then stymies U.S. intervention efforts with waves of air and sea drones that deny American and allied planes, ships and troops a foothold.

A year ago, CIA Director William Burns said Chinese Communist Party leader Xi Jinping had instructed his military to "be ready by 2027" to invade. But that doesn't mean an invasion is likely, or that the U.S.-China arms race over AI will not aggravate global instability.

### KISSINGER URGED ACTION

Just before he died last year, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger urged Beijing and Washington to work together to discourage AI arms proliferation. They have "a narrow window of opportunity," he said. "Restraints for AI need to occur before AI is built into the security structure of each society," Kissinger wrote with Harvard's Graham Allison.

Xi and President Joe Biden made a verbal agreement in November to set up working groups on AI safety, but that effort has so far taken a back seat to the arms race for autonomous drones.

The competition is not apt to build trust or reduce the risk of conflict, said William Hartung, a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. If the U.S. is "going full speed ahead, it's most likely China will accelerate whatever it's doing,"

Hartung said. There's a risk China could offer swarm technology to U.S. foes or repressive countries, analysts say. Or it could be stolen. Other countries developing the tech, such as Russia, Israel, Iran and Turkey, could also spread the know-how. U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan said in January that U.S.-China talks set to begin sometime this spring will address AI safety. Neither the defense secretary's office nor the National Security Council would comment on whether the military use of drone swarms might be on the agenda. The Chinese Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

#### A FIVE-YEAR WAIT

Military analysts, drone makers and AI researchers don't expect fully capable, combat-ready swarms to be fielded for five years or so, though big breakthroughs could happen sooner. "The Chinese have an edge in hardware right now. I think we have an edge in software," said CEO Adam Bry of U.S. drone maker Skydio, which supplies the Army, the Drug Enforcement Agency and the State Department, among other agencies. Chinese military analyst Song Zhongping said the U.S. has "stronger basic scientific and technological capabilities" but added that the American advantage is not "impossible to surpass." He said Washington also tends to overestimate the effect of its computer chip export restrictions on China's drone swarm advances. Paul Scharre, an AI expert at the Center for a New American Security think tank, believes the rivals are at rough parity.

"The bigger question for each country is about how do you use a drone swarm effectively?" he said. That's one reason all eyes are on the war in Ukraine, where drones work as eyes in the sky to make undetected front-line maneuvers all but impossible. They also deliver explosives and serve as sea-skimming ship killers.

Drones in Ukraine are often lost to jamming. Electronic interference is just one of many challenges for drone swarm development. Researchers are also focused on the difficulty of marshaling hundreds of air and sea drones in semi-autonomous swarms over vast expanses of the western Pacific for a potential war over Taiwan.

A secretive, now-inactive \$78 million program announced early last year by the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, or DARPA, seemed tailor-made for the Taiwan invasion scenario. The Autonomous Multi-Domain Adaptive Swarms-of-Swarms is a mouthful to say, but the mission is clear: Develop ways for thousands of autonomous land, sea and air drones to "degrade or defeat" a foe in seizing contested turf.

#### DRONES IMPROVISE — BUT MUST STICK TO ORDERS

A separate DARPA program called OFFensive Swarm-Enabled Tactics, had the goal of marshaling upwards of

250 land-based drones to assist Army troops in urban warfare.

Project coordinator Julie Adams, an Oregon State robotics professor, said swarm commanders in the exercise managed to choreograph up to 133 ground and air vehicles at a time. The drones were programmed with a set of tactics they could perform semi-autonomously, including indoor reconnaissance and simulated enemy kills. Under the direction of a swarm commander, the fleet acted something like an infantry squad whose soldiers are permitted some improvisation as long as they stick to orders.

"It's what I would call supervisory interaction, in that the human could stop the command or stop the tactic," Adams said. But once a course of action — such as an attack — was set in motion, the drone was on its own.

Adams said she was particularly impressed with a swarm commander in a different exercise last year at Fort Moore, Georgia, who single-handedly managed a 45-drone swarm over 2.5 hours with just 20 minutes of training.

"It was a pleasant surprise," she said.

A reporter had to ask: Was he a video game player? Yes, she said. "And he had a VR headset at home."

### Comer Announces Hearing on the CCP's Efforts to Infiltrate and Influence the United States

10 April 2024, [OverSight](#)

House Committee on Oversight and Accountability Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.) announced a hearing titled "Defending America from the Chinese Communist Party's Political Warfare, Part I." This first hearing will examine how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is waging war against the U.S. by targeting, infiltrating, and influencing every sector and community in America. At the hearing, members will hear from leading experts familiar with the methods and tactics deployed by the CCP to conduct non-kinetic warfare against the United States. On March 14, 2024, Chairman Comer [launched](#) a government-wide investigation into these dangerous CCP tactics and sought information from federal agencies to ensure the federal government is effectively utilizing existing resources to combat the CCP's political warfare.

"The CCP is waging an influence and infiltration campaign that threatens U.S. military readiness, the technology sector, financial markets, agriculture industry, education systems, intellectual property, and even our own federal government agencies. These federal agencies have important responsibilities to safeguard Americans from the CCP's nefarious tactics and the House Oversight Committee is uniquely equipped to ensure the federal government is taking

every action necessary to thwart China's political warfare," said Chairman Comer. "This hearing is the first in the Committee's government-wide investigation into CCP political warfare and the witnesses appearing will tell the story of how the CCP targets America. I look forward to exposing the CCP's actions and uncovering ways that federal agencies can work together to safeguard our communities."

### **China accuses US of Deporting Chinese students without proper evidence**

08 April 2024, [First Post](#)

In response to inquiries concerning claims that Chinese scholars and students were detained and compelled to leave the country upon crossing the border at Dallas and Washington Dulles airports, Mao stated that the US actions severely damaged the individuals involved and hampered people-to-people contacts between China and the US

China threatened to take "resolute measures" to protect the interests of its citizens on Monday, accusing the US of forcibly deporting Chinese students without any reasonable justification.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here that the US has been overly expanding the definition of national security and has arbitrarily canceled Chinese students' visas, prohibited them from visiting the US, and forcibly deported them without any solid proof.

In response to inquiries concerning claims that Chinese scholars and students were detained and compelled to leave the country upon crossing the border at Dallas and Washington Dulles airports, Mao stated that the US actions severely damaged the individuals involved and hampered people-to-people contacts between China and the US.

"The recent cases show that the US law enforcement personnel are bent on making excuses for deporting Chinese personnel. These are typical cases of selective, discriminatory and politically motivated law enforcement," Mao said. "China will take resolute measures to safeguard the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese citizens. The US needs to immediately stop unjustifiably harassing," she said.

China's state-run Global Times quoted Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng alleging that dozens of Chinese arriving in the US, including students, were being denied entry every month over the past few months.

He added that they were going back to school after visiting other places or seeing relatives in China, and that they had legal visas and no criminal records.

However, Xie claimed that after they arrived at the airport, they were subjected to an eight-hour interrogation by the authorities, who also forbade

them from speaking with their parents, falsely accused them, and even forcibly deported and barred them from entering the country.

Indian students in American schools surpassed Chinese students last year, according to figures from the US Department of Homeland Security.

The number of Chinese students studying in the US increased to 3.20 lakh last year from 2.54 lakh, which Chinese officials ascribed to the country's increasingly unfavorable climate due to worries over the flight of scientific knowledge.

## SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

### Chinese military on PM Modi's border remarks: 'Situation generally stable'

26 April 2024, [India Today](#)

The Chinese military, reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent comments on the India-China border row, said the present situation was "generally stable". It also said both countries had "effective" communication to resolve the standoff in eastern Ladakh.

The Chinese military on Thursday said the situation along the India-China border "at present" is "generally stable" and both sides have maintained "effective" communication to resolve the military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Defence Ministry spokesman Senior Colonel Wu Qian was reacting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent interview with Newsweek magazine. PM Modi had expressed hope that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, India and China will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity at their borders.

"At present, the situation in the border areas between China and India is generally stable," Wu said.

"Both the sides have maintained effective communication through diplomatic and military channels had positive constructive dialogue and achieved positive progress," he said while responding to a question on PM Modi's remarks and also Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's reported comments that India will continue to have dialogue with China to resolve the standoff at the border areas.

Wu said that "both sides have agreed to reach a mutually acceptable solution as soon as possible" to resolve the standoff.

In his interview, Modi said that for India, the relationship with China is important and significant. "It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us. Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and world," he said.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning in her response to Modi's interview on April 11 said sound and stable China-India relations serve the interests of both countries and are conducive to peace and development in the region and beyond.

Relations between India and China are frozen except for trade ever since the eastern Ladakh border standoff erupted on May 5, 2020, following a violent clash in the Pangong Tso (lake) area. The eastern Ladakh standoff has resulted in a freeze of bilateral ties on all fronts except trade.

The two sides have so far held 21 rounds of corps commanders-level talks to resolve the standoff.

According to the Chinese military, the two sides so far agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra).

India is pressing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to disengage from the Depsang and Demchok areas, maintaining that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal.

### **China may say whatever they want, but Sikkim is part of India: CM PS Tamang**

26 April 2024, [Northeast Now](#)

Sikkim chief minister Prem Singh Tamang-Golay has reaffirmed the territorial integrity of India, saying that the Himalayan state is an integral part of the country. Sikkim CM PS Tamang-Golay was reacting to the territorial claims made by China on the Himalayan state.

"Sikkim is an inseparable part of India," said CM PS Tamang-Golay.

The Sikkim chief minister added: "Regardless of any claims China make, we are an integral part of the vast Indian nation. Even if they make baseless claims, there is no truth to them."

He made this remark while on a "religious visit" to Dharamshala in Himachal Pradesh on Thursday (April 25).

CM Tamang said: "This visit of mine is purely for religious purposes. I am here to seek blessings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama."

### **India takes big step to counter China snooping threat from surveillance cameras**

16 April 2024, [India Today](#)

The government has amended the compulsory registration order for CCTV cameras sold in India to make testing of their 'essential security parameters' mandatory

After a series of deliberations on how to check alleged snooping by Beijing through a web of Chinese-origin CCTV cameras installed across India, including government and military establishments, the Union government has come out with safety guidelines keeping national security as top priority.

To date, the Indian government had no mechanism to check the installation of these Chinese-origin surveillance cameras, as the certification for such devices in use in the country only looked into aspects such as fire hazard or durability, and not security or snooping threats.

But early last week, the Union ministry of electronics and information technology (MeitY) amended the

compulsory registration order (CRO) for CCTV cameras sold in India. This amendment makes the testing of 'essential security parameters' of all CCTV cameras mandatory. Given the massive network of such cameras, the new regulation comes into effect on October 9 this year, thereby allowing manufacturers sufficient time to adapt.

Prioritising national security in such matters is crucial, especially given the sensitive nature of government and military establishments. Setting up guidelines to monitor and certify these surveillance cameras on the security aspect is a prudent move.

India is estimated to have over two million surveillance cameras, installed at every nook and corner. Out of these, around a million cameras made by Chinese companies are installed in various government institutions, posing a serious risk of snooping. It is suspected that CCTVs being deployed in most Indian government projects are of Chinese origin—imported from China and supplied as Made in India. This is a threat to national security.

It is estimated that the market penetration of Chinese CCTVs is over 80 per cent for domestic and over 98 per cent for government installations. As experts say, countries no longer need to send spies across the border. Such suspect CCTVs become the eyes of any country aiming to do mischief. Such cameras are the best tool for technical intelligence. The unchecked proliferation of such devices across India is a grave security risk.

The cover story of INDIA TODAY magazine's March 6, 2023 edition had unravelled the threat of China snooping on India through hundreds of thousands of such surveillance cameras, with security experts flagging serious concerns about the security threat.

In last week's notification, dated April 9, MeitY made the testing of 'essential security parameters' of CCTV cameras mandatory. The notification also mandates that test reports from Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)-recognised labs, such as the Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification, would need to be submitted by manufacturers.

Reacting to the guidelines, Lieutenant General Rajesh Pant (retired), former national cyber security coordinator for India's National Security Council and also chairman of the Cyber Security Association of India, told INDIA TODAY that the proliferation of CCTVs in the country without any security checks had created a major vulnerability for national security, since most of these devices were imported from the country of concern. This has led to remote surveillance and loss of data. "The notification by MeitY is a long-awaited and welcome step by the government to ensure that essential security parameters are built into these devices. I hope this is extended to all IoT (internet of things) devices in the future," Lt Gen. Pant said.



## PM spells out India's position on China

16 April 2024, [The Statesman](#)

In a recent interview to Newsweek, the Prime Minister, discussing Indo-China relations, commented, "For India, the relationship with China is important and significant. It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us. I hope and believe that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, we will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity on our borders." These words coming from Mr Narendra Modi, especially when electioneering is gaining steam, are profound. This is possibly the first time that the PM has hinted at rapprochement with China. Till now central ministers took credit for the performance of the army in the ongoing standoff, while insisting on no loss of territory. External Affairs minister S Jaishankar had repeatedly stated that bilateral ties cannot be normal unless the border situation reverts to pre-April 2020. PM Modi has adopted the same approach, while supporting dialogue.

The PM had thus far maintained silence, while avoiding an embarrassing situation resulting from him and President Xi Jinping being present on a common platform. The conduct of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) summit in online mode as also the nonpresence of Mr Xi at the G-20 worked to his benefit. The PM even refused to meet the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, on his visits to India. India also rejected calls by China to rebuild relations placing the border issue at an 'appropriate place' while concentrating on other aspects of the relationship. Simultaneously, India is expending resources to boost its military capabilities and infrastructure to close the gap with China.

The recent conduct of the Agni 5 test with MIRV technology, demonstrated that India is an equal and not a nation which could be pressured or bullied. India's military deployment along the LAC matches China's, confirming that India will not back down. The PM's message was that while India is extending a hand of friendship it possesses the capability to respond in case of any misadventures. To assuage Chinese misconceptions, the PM also spoke of the Quad. He mentioned, "Quad is not aimed against any country. Like many other international groupings, SCO, BRICS and others, Quad is a group of likeminded countries working on a shared positive agenda." He added, "The Quad has established itself as an important platform for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific." The message was evident. Apart from countering China's continuous prattle that the Quad is a military alliance created to contain it, PM Modi

confirmed that India will remain its member and be allied to the West, while balancing its ties with others. The message could not have been more subtle.

These signals from the nation's top leadership were assessed by the Chinese. Since India is in the midst of elections, there is unlikely to be any forward movement from Beijing. PM Modi's statements for normalization of ties come at a time when relations between the two nations are sliding downhill. Further, tensions in the East and South China Seas as also the Taiwan strait are at an all-time high. China has, for the third time, issued its own list of names for places in Arunachal Pradesh, strongly condemned by India.

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, stated "China noted PM Modi's remarks." She added, "China and India are in close communication through diplomatic and military channels to address issues related to the border situation, and have achieved positive progress." She parroted the Chinese line, "We hope that India will work with China to place the boundary question appropriately in bilateral relations and manage it properly, and put the relationship on a sound and steady track."

The Global Times, Beijing's mouthpiece, in an editorial termed PM Modi's remarks as 'rare,' mentioning, "Modi's direct statement, especially his clear position, is quite rare and carefully timed, hence receiving exceptional attention from the public." It added, "Modi's interview has sent out quite positive signals regarding China-Indian relations." It further mentioned that China believes that the statement may not be too 'pleasing' to some in Washington. Beijing assumes that Washington desires Indo-China ties remain tense as it backs their Indo-Pacific strategy.

As per the Global Times, 'being in conflict would squeeze resources needed for development (for India).' Possibly the Chinese are hinting that the current deployment is the new normal and should be accepted. For China to pull back to pre-April 2020 positions could be considered a setback. Internally, the PM's statement was criticized by the Congress. Its spokesperson, Jairam Ramesh, tweeted, 'the Prime Minister's reaction to the China issue is not only disgraceful but also disrespectful to our martyrs who made the supreme sacrifice in defending our borders.' PM Modi also clarified that India will compete with China in the economic field. He mentioned, "We believe that when a country with one-sixth of the world's population adopts global standards, it will have a big positive impact on the world. We have major global manufacturing entities setting up shops in India. India is now globally considered most suited for manufacturing world-class goods at competitive cost.

Apart from producing for the world, the vast Indian domestic market is an added attraction." Evidently,

India is proving to be the destination that companies exiting China wish to embrace. The forthcoming visit of Elon Musk and talks of a plant in India has China concerned. Sending a message to Pakistan on non-interference, PM Modi mentioned, "I won't comment on matters internal (incarceration of Imran Khan) to Pakistan." The Pakistani government reciprocating appears unlikely. There were no comments from Islamabad on PM Modi's statement.

India is clear. While it seeks dialogue and desires normalization of ties, it will not bow down. Its capability, development and trained armed forces send a firm message that it is not a pushover. For China, facing tensions in the East and South China seas, as also the straits of Taiwan, alongside a receding economy, peace with India is to its advantage. PM Modi's message has been received in Beijing. It is now for them to respond. Unless they display positivity, tensions would remain. Further, India will compete with China by offering better sops to global manufacturers. (The writer is a retired Major-General of the Indian Army.)

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16 April 2024, [India Today](#)

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Prioritising national security in such matters is crucial, especially given the sensitive nature of government and military establishments. Setting up guidelines to

monitor and certify these surveillance cameras on the security aspect is a prudent move.

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Reacting to the guidelines, Lieutenant General Rajesh Pant (retired), former national cyber security coordinator for India's National Security Council and also chairman of the Cyber Security Association of India, told INDIA TODAY that the proliferation of CCTVs in the country without any security checks had created a major vulnerability for national security, since most of these devices were imported from the country of concern. This has led to remote surveillance and loss of data. "The notification by MeitY is a long-awaited and welcome step by the government to ensure that essential security parameters are built into these devices. I hope this is extended to all IoT (internet of things) devices in the future," Lt Gen. Pant said.

### **Indian Army celebrates 40 years of 'Operation Meghdoot' on Siachen Glacier**

13 April 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

The Indian Army marked a significant milestone as it commemorated 40 years since the commencement of its presence on the strategically vital Siachen Glacier. Known as 'Operation Meghdoot', this operation has

been a remarkable journey of technological progress and logistical advancements.

### **Technological Progress and Infrastructure Development**

Over the last four decades, significant efforts have been made to enhance infrastructure and habitat on the Siachen Glacier. One notable advancement is the improvement in mobile and data connectivity, with the introduction of VSAT (Very Small Aperture Terminal) technology. This technology has revolutionized communication on the glacier, providing troops with crucial data and internet connectivity.

### **Enhanced Supply Chain and Logistics**

The introduction of heavy-lift helicopters and logistic drones has significantly improved the supply of essential resources to personnel stationed at isolated posts, especially during harsh winter conditions. This includes ensuring the availability of clothing, mountaineering equipment, and rations.

### **Improved Living Conditions and Connectivity**

Recent initiatives have focused on improving connectivity, leading to advancements in the supply chain. This has ensured that personnel stationed at forward posts in the Northern and Central Glaciers now have access to fresh rations and vegetables.

### **State-of-the-Art Medical Infrastructure**

The Siachen Glacier now boasts state-of-the-art medical infrastructure, including telemedicine nodes established by ISRO. These facilities provide critical medical support not only to troops but also to the local populace and tourists in the Nubra Valley.

### **Recognition of Sacrifices and Immortal Spirit**

The Indian Army, in a press release, acknowledged the sacrifices of its brave soldiers and the immortal spirit that has characterized its long deployment in Siachen.

### **Operation Meghdoot's Unique Significance**

Launched in 1984 to secure the Siachen Glacier in Jammu and Kashmir, 'Operation Meghdoot' was unique as it involved the first assault on the world's highest battlefield. The result was the Indian troops gaining control of the entire Siachen Glacier.

Operation Meghdoot, launched on April 13, 1984, by the Indian Army and Indian Air Force (IAF), marked a pivotal moment in securing the Siachen Glacier, a strategically crucial region dominating Northern Ladakh. The operation involved airlifting Indian Army soldiers, with IAF helicopters operating in the area since 1978, including the first landing of an IAF helicopter on the glacier in October 1978.

The need for Operation Meghdoot arose due to Pakistan's cartographic aggression in Ladakh, allowing foreign mountaineering expeditions in Siachen. Intelligence inputs about impending Pakistani military action prompted India to secure strategic heights on Siachen, deploying troops via airlifts and air-dropping supplies to high-altitude airfields.

### **IAF's Role and Evolution in Operation Meghdoot**

The IAF played a crucial role in supporting Operation Meghdoot, initially focusing on transport and helicopter aircraft for troop and material transport. Gradually, the IAF expanded its role, deploying fighter aircraft like the Hunter, MiG-23s, and MiG-29s, operating from high-altitude airfields at Leh and Thoise. This expanded role included fighter sweeps and simulated strikes over the glacier, boosting morale and deterring adversaries.

In 2009, the IAF inducted Cheetal helicopters, re-engineered for high-altitude operations, and in 2013, showcased its capabilities by landing a Lockheed Martin C-130J Super Hercules at Daulat Beg Oldie, the world's highest airstrip near the line of actual control in Ladakh. Today, a variety of IAF aircraft, including Rafale, Su-30MKI, Chinook, Apache, and others, support Operation Meghdoot.

### **IAF's Lifeline Role in Extreme Conditions**

Operating in the highest battlefield globally, IAF helicopters are the lifeline for Indian troops, providing crucial support in emergencies, logistics supply, and evacuating the sick and wounded from the glacier. Their operations set records in human endurance, flying, and technical proficiency, showcasing the IAF's commitment and skill in supporting the four-decade-old military operation on the Siachen Glacier.

As the Indian Army celebrates 40 years on the Siachen Glacier, it reflects not only on the progress made in technological advancements and logistical improvements but also on the sacrifices and dedication of its personnel. 'Operation Meghdoot' stands as a testament to India's commitment to safeguarding its borders and ensuring the well-being of its troops in one of the world's most challenging terrains.

### **China has not occupied any Indian land, claims S Jaishankar**

13 April 2024, [Scroll](#)

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar claimed on Friday that China has not occupied any of India's land, but said that the situation along the Line of Actual Control remains "competitive, sensitive and challenging", *The Indian Express* reported.

The Line of Actual Control is the de facto demarcation between Indian and Chinese-held territory.

Jaishankar, during a press meet in Pune, said that India and China earlier never had troops on the Line of Actual Control, and both armies deployed forces away from it on their respective sides.

The minister said that China had brought its troops forward in some locations along the Line of Actual Control in 2020. "In response, we also advanced our units and a standoff ensued," he said. "After that, the

two armies continue to battle for supremacy... But there is no encroachment."

The minister added: "China has tried to bring its troops to the upper part of the mountainous areas along the LAC [Line of Actual Control] but the Indian Army also responded to it in the same manner."

However, in January last year, a senior police officer posted in Leh said in a research paper that India has lost access to 26 out of 65 patrolling points in the eastern Ladakh region. Leh Senior Superintendent of Police PD Nitya had said that Indian security forces were no longer able to patrol 26 patrolling points located between the Karakoram Pass and the Chumur region in eastern Ladakh – a major flashpoint of border conflicts between India and China. A report by the United States Department of Defense on October 19 said that China continued to develop large-scale military infrastructure, including an airport, along the Line of Actual control in 2022 despite holding talks with India on resolving border disagreements. Border tensions between India and China have increased since June 2020 when a major face-off between Indian and Chinese soldiers took place in Galwan Valley of Ladakh. The clashes, which took place at multiple locations along the Line of Actual Control, had led to the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers. Beijing had said that the clash left four of its soldiers dead. Tensions had flared at multiple friction points, with both countries stationing tens of thousands of troops backed by artillery, tanks and fighter jets. Since the Galwan clashes, China and India have held several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to resolve the border standoff.

### **China says 'great positive progress' made to resolve border row with India**

12 April 2024, [Times of India](#)

Chinese foreign ministry official on Friday said that China and India have made "great positive progress" to resolve the border standoff, with both sides maintaining close communication throughout the process.

This statement by foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning were elaborated on China's response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent comments in which he said that for New Delhi, ties with Beijing are important and the "prolonged situation" at the borders should be addressed urgently.

PM Modi, in an interview with Newsweek magazine, expressed optimism that through constructive engagement at diplomatic and military levels, both countries can achieve peace and tranquillity at the border.

In response to a question on PM Modi's interview to Newsweek, Mao said, "About the border issue, I can

tell you that China and India are remaining in close communication through diplomatic and military channels and great positive progress has been made."

"We also believe that a healthy China and India relations serve the interests of the two countries," she said.

"China hopes that India will work in the same direction with China to properly manage the differences and promote the bilateral relations forward on a healthy stable track," Mao added.

This was China's respond for the second time in two days to PM Modi's interview. "It is my belief that we need to urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us," the Prime Minister said in his interview.

"Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and world," PM Modi said.

The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson reiterated China's stance on the border issue and said, "Sound and stable China-India relations serve the interests of both countries and are conducive to peace and development in the region and beyond."

On the boundary question, she clarified China's oft-repeated stand that it does not "represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in bilateral relations and managed properly".

India, on the other hand, has maintained that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the state of the borders remains abnormal. Both countries have engaged in close communication through diplomatic and military channels, making progress towards addressing the border situation, Mao said

"We hope that India will work with China, approach the bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, keep building trust and engage in dialogue and cooperation, and seek to handle differences appropriately to put the relationship on a sound and stable track," she added.

The recent interactions between China and India come against the backdrop of the standoff in eastern Ladakh since May 5, 2020, following clashes in the Pangong Tso (lake) area.

The two nations have conducted multiple rounds of talks to ease tensions, agreeing to disengage from certain points. However, India continues to urge China to disengage from additional areas to normalize relations fully.

The two sides so far agreed to disengage from four points, namely the Galwan Valley, the Pangong Lake, Hot Springs, and Jianan Daban (Gogra), as per the Chinese military.

India urges the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to withdraw from Depsang and Demchok regions, stressing that there cannot be restoration of normalcy in its relations with China as long as the border remains tense.

### Naam ke vaaste, let's call Tibet dalailabad

11 April 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

Rajnath Singh, wearing his semiotician's pagdi at an election rally at Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday, made an excellent suggestion, without actually suggesting it - changing names of Chinese provinces. The defmin was actually making a point about how Beijing continuously referring to Arunachal Pradesh as 'Zangnan' makes the Indian state as much a Chinese territory as giving Indian names to Chinese provinces will make them 'Indian'. But to sidestep Singh's version of the Bard's 'What's in a name?' reasoning, we think it's a great idea to Indianise those proper nouns 'up there'. The exercise can jolly well start with Tibet - or, as the Chinese call it, 'Xijiang Autonomous Region' - being named Dalailabad. Guangdong would, in the spirit of Gurgaon, be Guangram. Shanghai can be shanghaied into Bheemtalaiya, for no reason other than it sounds robust. Instead of calling Beijing 'Peking' again, the Chinese capital can sound rather piquant if renamed Jijingapatnam. f the nomenklatura from the Muddle Kingdom are outraged, they can be calmly told that this isn't about challenging Chinese territory by aggressive proper nouncing, but it's just how the world's most populous country's citizens will call these places. After all, the French calling Deutschland 'Allemagne' and English-speakers calling it 'Germany' don't threaten the Deutsche.

### In Newsweek interview, PM Modi speaks on India-China border dispute: 'We need to urgently address...'

10 April 2024, [Hindustan Times](#)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping(MEAIndia)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stressed the need to urgently address the "prolonged situation" on the disputed India-China border to normalise the bilateral ties between the two countries, according to a report. In an interview with Newsweek magazine, PM Modi underscored that stable and peaceful relations betw"I hope and believe that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, we will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquility in our borders," he said. On the topic of competing with China, Prime Minister Modi highlighted India's economic reforms and positioned the nation as an attractive choice for businesses seeking to diversify their supply chain. He pointed out key reforms such as the Goods and Service Tax, corporate tax reduction, bankruptcy code, and labour law reforms, which have significantly improved India's ease of doing business.

"We are striving to make our regulatory framework, our taxation practices as well as our infrastructure at par with global standards," Modi said. "We believe that when a country with one-sixth of the world's population adopts global standards in these sectors, it will have a big positive impact on the world," he added. He highlighted initiatives such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes across 14 sectors, including electronics, solar modules, medical devices, and automobiles, to bolster India's manufacturing capabilities.

"Given our strengths, India is now globally considered most suited for manufacturing world-class goods at competitive cost. Apart from producing for the world, the vast Indian domestic market is an added attraction. India is a perfect destination for those who want to set up trusted and resilient supply chains," he said. Prime Minister Modi is seeking a rare third term in office the country starts voting for seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on April 19.

### China's Neighbor Sends Russian-Made Air Defense Missiles to Border

10 April 2024, [News Week](#)

India is set to deploy Russian-made man-portable air defense systems, or MANPADs, along its disputed border with China, even as Moscow and Beijing reaffirm their shared opposition against common adversaries in the West.

"The Igla-S systems are under procurement for the new authorized air defense formations for high mountainous terrain along the northern border," Indian news outlet The Print reported on Monday.

The Indian army first began using the Soviet-designed MANPADS in 2021. New Delhi is acquiring more of the shoulder-fired missiles amid a four-year military

standoff with Beijing, which began after the deadly Galwan Valley skirmish in June 2020. Since then, the two Asian giants have stationed thousands of soldiers at the Line of Actual Control. The de facto boundary in the Himalayas has separated India and China since a bloody border war in the 1960s.



A Russia-made Igla-S man-portable air defense system, or MANPADS, is seen in images published on manufacturer Rosoboronexports's website. India will deploy Russia-made Igla-S MANDPADS on the border with China.

Leaders in Russia and China have further strengthened their countries' strategic partnership in recent years amid heavy scrutiny since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war two years ago. The United States recently told its NATO allies that Beijing's material support for Moscow was growing to significant levels, although Chinese officials say the country remains a neutral party.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, a Swedish think tank, said Russia was India's biggest source of defense imports last year, accounting for 36 percent of all arms purchases, according to a March report.

Despite that, however, the period from 2019-2023 was the first time since 1960-1964 that Russia's arms sales accounted for less than half of India's overall imports, SIPRI said.

Weapons manufactured by China and India have been found on the battlefields of the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Igla-S MANPADS also have been used by Ukrainian forces to shoot down Russian aircraft.

The Russian and Chinese foreign ministries and the Indian External Affairs Ministry did not immediately respond to separate written requests for comment before publication.

India's upcoming deployment of Igla-S systems to its border with China, despite Beijing's friendship with Moscow, suggests the Kremlin leadership is unable to dictate terms on weapons sales, subject matter experts believe.

"The general public is not privy to the actual terms of the contract, but over the years, the general impression is that Russia does not impose any preconditions on the use of its weapons," said Nandan Unnikrishnan, a distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation think tank in New Delhi and the former Moscow bureau chief of the Press Trust of India news agency.

"So far Russia-China relations haven't visibly impacted the India-Russia defense partnership," Unnikrishnan told *Newsweek*.

India recently sold the BrahMos missile system, jointly developed with Russia, to the Philippines, a U.S. treaty ally locked in a territorial dispute with China.

The Philippines will deploy land-based and anti-ship variants of the missile system along its coastline to counter Beijing's assertiveness in the South China Sea. "As the world's fastest supersonic cruise missiles, the BrahMos missiles will provide deterrence against any attempt to undermine our sovereignty and sovereign rights, especially in the West Philippine Sea," Delfin Lorenzana, the Philippines' former defense minister, said one year ago, referring to the section of the South China Sea that falls within the Philippines exclusive economic zone.

Christopher Clary, an associate professor at the State University of New York, told *Newsweek* that India may worry about China's leverage over Russia and its future implications.

"I've seen little evidence Russia seeks to censor the arms it makes available to India in order to appease their Chinese partner. Yet India must be concerned that in the event of a serious China-India conflict, Beijing would put enormous pressure on Russia to halt spares and ammunition destined to India," Clary said. "Even with acquisitions like [the Igla-S], what remains an open question is whether India will invest in sufficient munitions to fight a long war. The war in Ukraine showcases how expensive and exhausting long wars can be," Clary added.

### Why are there three Chinese spy ships in the Indian Ocean Region?

10 April 2024, [Hindustan Times](#)



Xiang Yang Hong 01

High endurance Chinese surveillance vessel Xiang Yang Hong 01 is anchored 600 miles west of Andaman Islands (middle of Bay of Bengal) in international water.

After deploying maritime coercion in South China Sea against ASEAN countries, at least three Chinese survey and surveillance vessels are in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as part of PLA Navy's expansionist objective to launch carrier task force patrols by 2025 through mapping the Indo-Pacific region. As of now, high endurance Chinese surveillance vessel Xiang Yang Hong 01 is anchored 600 miles west of Andaman Islands (middle of Bay of Bengal) in international water conducting trials of high endurance autonomous underwater vehicles, which can stay at the depths of nearly 12 kilometers for three months mapping the ocean bed and collect oceanographic data for future submarine operations. The XYH 01 entered the Bay of Bengal on March 7-8 night and continues to be stationed in the area. Another Chinese survey ship Xiang Yang Hong 03 is employing unmanned systems for ocean observation and hydrographic surveying 350 miles of Maldives with the friendly Muizzu regime in power in Male. While the Indian Navy is monitoring the movements of these Chinese vessels in international waters, the main purpose is to validate ocean models for future deployment of naval assets in the IOR like aircraft carriers. The XYH 03 entered the IOR some three months ago and continues to operate outside Maldives. A third surveillance ship Da Yang Hao is lying 1200 miles south of Port Louis in Mauritius with the 45th PLA anti-piracy escort force operating south west of the Capital at 550 miles. The 46th anti-piracy task force of PLA is operating off the Gulf of Aden albeit there is no news of Chinese vessels intercepting any Somalian pirates or neutralizing any Houthi missiles. As no action can be taken against these vessels operating in international waters, fact is that the PLA is exercising its sea legs for future global naval footprint and courting nations in Indo-Pacific and Africa to influence their maritime policies in the name of defence cooperation. The Chinese Song class submarine was in Karachi harbor in late 2023 and apparently did the 'bottoming' operations off the Makran coast. Given that India will face maritime coercion from China in the coming years, the Indian Navy will have to acquire unmanned underwater drones and long endurance submarines for deterrence operations. An Indian submarine in equatorial waters can play havoc with the adversary as the difference between the surface ocean temperature and sub-surface temperature is high leading to total internal reflection. This means that the Indian submarine will be seen (if at all) at a ghost location rather than its actual position. It is precisely for this very reason that the Chinese PLA collects ocean temperature, salinity,

sound, velocity, sediment characteristics, and sea bottom profile in the IOR.

### China may disrupt elections in India using AI, warns Microsoft

08 April 2024, [Economic Times](#)

Software giant Microsoft has issued a warning regarding China's potential use of artificial intelligence (AI) to disrupt elections in several countries, including India, the US, South Korea. According to Microsoft Threat Intelligence insights, China is likely to utilize AI-generated content to advance its interests, particularly in the upcoming major elections.

The report from Microsoft Threat Analysis Centre (MTAC) highlights the looming threat, stating, "With major elections taking place around the world this year, particularly in India, South Korea, and the United States, we assess that China will, at a minimum, create and amplify AI-generated content to benefit its interests."

While the probability of such content significantly impacting election outcomes remains low, Microsoft predicts that China's ongoing experimentation with augmenting memes, videos, and audio could prove more effective in the future. The Lok Sabha elections in India are scheduled between April 19 and June 4, with South Korea holding its elections on April 10, and the United States preparing for its presidential election in November. The warning from Microsoft follows reports of China's alleged dry run with the presidential election in Taiwan, where it

Microsoft anticipates that Chinese state-backed cyber groups, along with North Korean involvement, will target high-profile elections in 2024. The report emphasizes the potential involvement of Chinese cyber and influence actors in influencing these elections through the creation and dissemination of AI-generated content via social media platforms.

"While the impact of such content in swaying audiences remains low, China's increasing experimentation in augmenting memes, videos, and audio will continue – and may prove effective down the line," Microsoft stated.

attempted an AI-generated disinformation campaign in January. The report mentions a Beijing-backed group named Storm 1376, also known as Spamouflage or Dragonbridge, which was highly active during the Taiwanese election.

Moreover, there has been a rise in the use of AI-generated TV news anchors, a tactic reportedly employed by Iran as well. These AI-generated anchors disseminate misinformation, including unfounded claims about individuals' private lives. Microsoft disclosed that the news anchors were created using

the CapCut tool developed by Chinese company ByteDance, the owner of TikTok.

The emergence of AI as a tool for influencing elections underscores the evolving landscape of cybersecurity and the challenges faced by authorities in combating disinformation campaigns orchestrated by state-backed actors. As nations gear up for crucial electoral processes, vigilance against such threats remains paramount to safeguarding the integrity of democratic processes worldwide.

### **Chengdu as Bharatnagar and Kunming as Modinagar?**

07 April 2024, [Arunachal Times](#)

Just a week back, China audaciously released a fourth list of 30 new names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh, which include 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass, 11 residential areas, etc.

Earlier, on 2 April 2023, China renamed 11 places in Arunachal with Chinese names. Before that also, China renamed six places in Arunachal in 2017, followed by renaming 15 places in 2021. The renamed places include mountains, rivers and places like Mechukha, Manigong, Tawang, Sela, Walong, etc. China regularly claims Arunachal as southern Tibet or 'Zangnan'.

China regularly issues stapled visas to officials and sportspersons from Arunachal planning to visit China. In a few cases, such as the one that happened with me, China said that visa is not required to visit China. China regularly objects to visits by central ministers or senior officials to Arunachal.

China traces back this dispute to the McMahon Line. The 890-km-long McMahon Line demarcates the eastern border between India and China, and follows the watershed principle running along the highest ridges, starting from Bhutan to the trijunction of India, China and Myanmar.

The McMahon Line was created during the Shimla Agreement of 1914. The British Indian representative was Henry McMahon, then secretary in the Indian foreign department, Tibet was represented by Lama Lonchen Shatra, and the Chinese representative was a diplomat named Ivan Chen. After almost a year of negotiations, the McMahon Line was initially presented on 22 April, 1914, along with an attached map. On 25 April, 1914, the Chinese representative submitted a memorandum with a number of objections to the boundaries between Inner Tibet and Outer Tibet and Inner Tibet and China. There were no objections by the Chinese representative on the border between Tibet and India. Thereafter, on 27 April, 1914, the Chinese representative initialled both the documents and the map without any objections. However, the actual agreement documents were kept secret till 1937, when the McMahon Line was first

published in a Survey of India map. If the Chinese representative had no objections to the border between Tibet and India and had initialled the documents and the map during the Shimla Agreement of 1914, why are the Chinese still claiming Arunachal as 'southern Tibet'?

This claim is bogus, hegemonic and not supported by documents and facts.

Arunachal is mentioned in the ancient Indian epics Mahabharata, Kalika and Bhagavad Purana (10th century AD). Having studied Chinese language and hailing from Arunachal, it may be firmly stated that the people of Arunachal, comprising many tribes, are culturally, traditionally, linguistically, and racially different from the Han Chinese. Arunachalis are patriotic Indians and have never been a part of mainland China.

Why does China continue this aggressive behaviour, especially with respect to Arunachal? Isn't it time for us to give back to China? The government of India should start issuing stapled visas to a few Chinese officials. Another way could be to rename Chinese cities like Chengdu as Bharatnagar, Kunming as Modinagar, and Nyingchi as Arunnagar. (The contributor is retired Group Captain, Indian Air Force)

### **US 'strongly opposes' China's renaming of areas along disputed Indian border**

07 April 2024, [The Star](#)

Washington has criticised Beijing's list of 30 new names for places along the 1,865-mile (3,000km) disputed Himalayan border between China and India, formally known as the Line of Actual Control, as yet another "unilateral attempt" to reassert its territorial claims.

"The United States strongly opposes any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control," a US State Department representative said on Tuesday.

On Sunday, the Post first reported about the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs' fourth list of "standardised" names for places, including mountains, rivers, residential areas in the Indian-administered Arunachal Pradesh state, which China calls Zangnan and claims as part of the Tibetan autonomous region.

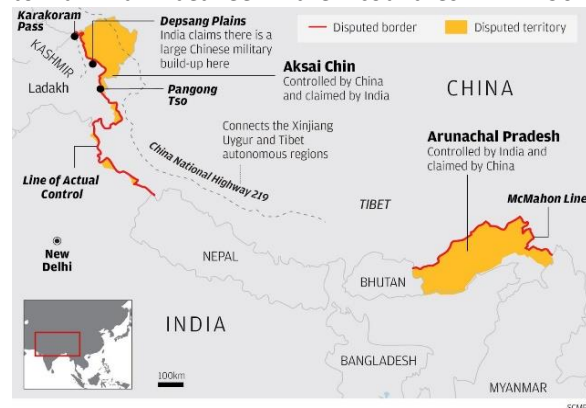
After the report was picked up by several Indian news outlets, New Delhi's foreign affairs ministry rejected Beijing's "senseless attempt" at "inventing" names and "altering reality".

The two nuclear-armed neighbours have held 21 rounds of military-level talks since 2020, when at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed in a fight along the border.



No breakthrough was achieved during the latest meeting in February as both sides agreed to keep communicating while also positioning extra troops and equipment.

Disagreements over the poorly demarcated border led to a war between the countries in 1962.



Last month, a tunnel inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Arunachal Pradesh became the latest flashpoint. As India and China traded warnings and made overlapping claims of national sovereignty, Washington openly sided with its Indo-Pacific partner New Delhi – angering Beijing.

“The United States recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory,” a State Department representative said in a press briefing. Beijing then accused Washington of trying “to provoke and take advantage of other countries’ conflicts to serve its selfish geopolitical interests”.

Arunachal Pradesh, located on India’s eastern tip, is claimed in its entirety by China. The state shares historical ties with Tibet and is home to the Tawang Monastery, where the sixth Dalai Lama was born in 1683. Buddhists account for the fourth-largest religious group there, following Christians, Hindus and a mix of other local religions.

US sharing of intelligence with India in China border clash seen as pivotal

After being largely neutral on the dispute for decades, the US in recent years has strengthened its cooperation with New Delhi, including a more active role in sharing intelligence as part of its Indo-Pacific strategy to check Chinese activity in the region.

In its October 2022 National Defence Strategy, the administration of President Joe Biden pledged that it would support US allies and partners when they encounter “acute forms of grey zone coercion” from China’s “campaigns to establish control over the East China Sea, Taiwan Strait, South China Sea and disputed land borders such as with India”.

Real-time intelligence provided by the US about Chinese positions along the disputed line prepared India to successfully ward off a potential Chinese military “incursion” in December 2022, marking the first time Washington passed on key information on

Chinese strength along the Sino-India in advance to its Indian counterparts.

## Ban order compels climate activist Sonam Wangchuk to call off Tibet-border March

07 March 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Well-known Ladakh-based Indian climate activist Mr Sonam Wangchuk has called off his planned Apr 7 march at the head of his supporters to the Chinese-occupied Tibet’s border. He wanted to “avoid any sort of confrontation with the law-enforcing agencies,” reported *deccanchronicle.com* Apr 6. He has said the purpose of staging the march had already been achieved in any case while vowing to continue the agitation for statehood.

Wangchuk, 57, had announced last month that he would lead around 10,000 people of Ladakh in a march to the Chinese occupied Tibet’s border to showcase the extent of the Ladakhi land lost to Chinese encroachment in the north and how the local farmers and shepherds were losing prime pastureland to huge industrial plants in the south.

Wangchuk, a Magsaysay Award winner and the founding-director of the Students’ Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh, has also said, after ending a 21-day hunger strike on Mar 26, that the agitation to demand statehood for Ladakh will be intensified in coming weeks.

Ladakh is currently a Union Territory, after being a part of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir for many decades. Ladakhis find the Union Territory status to be inimical to their interests.

The decision to call off the march followed an Apr 5 order by the Leh District Magistrate Santosh Sukhadeve, imposing prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC (Criminal Procedure Code), banning holding of processions, rallies and marches in the district without his prior approval “to prevent any breach of peace, disturbance to public tranquillity and danger to human life.”

The Union Territory status means that Ladakh is ruled by the central government through a Lieutenant Governor appointed by it, like in the case of the nation’s capital New Delhi whose embattled Aam Aadmi Party government too has been demanding full-statehood for it.

Also, Ladakh’s Additional Director General of Police Darshan Singh had ordered the suspension of mobile data of 3G, 4G and 5G and public Wi-Fi 5G facilities temporarily “in the interest of maintenance of public peace, and law and order” in the Union Territory, the report said.

The decision to call off the march was stated to have been announced by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) at a press conference on Apr 6 in which Wangchuk also took

part. Its leaders have also said they had, in any case, already achieved their objective of creating awareness among the people of the country about the plight of farmers, who are allegedly losing prime pastureland to huge industrial plants in the south and to "Chinese encroachments".

The report quoted Wangchuk also as saying: "We are concerned about national security and the peaceful atmosphere. Secondly, our aim to generate awareness in the country about the ground situation in Ladakh has been achieved, so we are withdrawing the proposed border march in the interest of people and to avoid confrontation with the law-enforcement agencies."

### China developing 175 more security villages in Tibet near India-border?

06 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

China is set to develop 175 more border villages on the occupied-Tibet side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) facing the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. These settlements will be in addition to the 628 "Xiaokang" or "prosperous villages", otherwise seen to be meant to serve as border security villages, near the LAC, reported *tribuneindia.com* Apr 5, citing unnamed sources.

The move is reported to be seen in India as being designed to bolster territorial claim under a 2005 bilateral accord and to enhance military preparedness for future possible armed conflicts.

This move is part of a larger effort to construct 900 LAC villages, including 200 near the Indian boundary, which will function both as monitoring points and potential military bases in conflict scenario with India, the report said.

China could be looking to build a strong legal defence under the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA), 2005, with India. Article VII of BDCA says "the two sides shall safeguard due interests of their settled populations in the border areas". So as and when a situation arises to demarcate the LAC, these "settled populations" villages are not likely to be disturbed, the report cited sources as saying, adding Indian villages facing these new settlements were currently very thinly populated.

In terms of military preparedness, China has undertaken extensive infrastructure development projects in Tibet and in areas near the LAC. Its current, 14th Five Year Plan (2021-2025) includes expansion of the Nyingchi phase of the Sichuan-Tibet railway line, preliminary work on the Hotan-Shigatse and Gyirong-Shigatse rail lines and the Chengdu-Wuhan-Shanghai high speed railway network, the report noted.

The plan is said to include upgrading the national highways G-219 and G-318, both running parallel to

the LAC with India. The G-219 runs opposite the Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh borders while the G-318 runs opposite Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim borders, the report noted.

Beijing's dual goals of promoting the integration of Tibet into China and ramping up infrastructure development are seen as a strategy aimed at deepening Chinese influence and asserting its power in the region.

The report further noted that last week, in an attempt to cover up the "capture" of Tibet, the Chinese conducted celebratory ceremonies on its side of the LAC and labelled them as the "65th anniversary of democratic reform" in Xizang (Tibet). The illegal dissolution of the Tibetan government headed by the Dalai Lama took place on Mar 28, 1959. The celebratory ceremonies focused on two sites north of Arunachal Pradesh and one spot north of Sikkim, it added.

### US Reacts After China Renames Neighbor's Territory

08 April 2024, [News Week](#)

The U.S. strongly opposed China's renaming of 30 locations inside India's Arunachal Pradesh, as Beijing's push to further its territorial claims is escalating tensions between the two Asian giants.

"The United States strongly opposes any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control," a U.S. State Department official said on Tuesday, according to Hong Kong newspaper the *South China Morning Post*.

The U.S. comment on China's renaming policy came as Beijing has recently escalated its claim over Arunachal Pradesh by calling the area part of its territory "since ancient times."

China's Ministry of Civil Affairs on March 30 issued "standardized" names of places in Mandarin and Tibetan for locations inside Arunachal Pradesh. The list of 30 names included places with rivers, mountains, a lake and residential areas.

The renaming effort was China's fourth attempt to use cartographic renaming of locations in Arunachal Pradesh to further its territorial claims.

China claims the area as part of *Zangnan*, or South Tibet, based on historical rights. In the past, China has released official maps showing the region as part of its territory and issued separate visas to Indian citizens from Arunachal Pradesh to further its sovereignty claim.

The two countries fought a bloody war in the 1960s over the region, and their 2,100-mile-long disputed mutual border remains a thorny issue. Since June 2020, China and India have been locked in a new

military stand-off with thousands of soldiers deployed across from each other in the Eastern Ladakh region. The military officials from the two sides have met 21 times so far as part of a special effort to defuse tensions in the frigid Himalayan region.

Beijing has used a similar approach to extend claims in disputed islands in the South China Sea, giving Mandarin names to maritime features.

A Chinese military spokesperson recently issued a stark statement to solidify the claims on Arunachal Pradesh.

"Zangnan has been China's territory since ancient times. This is an undeniable fact," Col. Wu Qian, China's defense ministry spokesperson, said on March 28.

*Newsweek* contacted China's embassy in New Delhi and India's Ministry of External Affairs for comment.

"China has persisted with its senseless attempts to rename places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. We firmly reject such attempts," a spokesperson from India's External Affairs Ministry said on Tuesday.

"If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect," Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, India's external affairs minister, said on Monday, according to the Indian newspaper *The Hindustan Times*.

Observers believe the renaming attempt seeks to strategically further Beijing's territorial claims.

"It does bare China's mala-fide intent, and its larger designs: renaming places in Arunachal, showing Arunachal within China on new maps, putting roadblocks to the entry of sportspersons from Arunachal. This is part of its plan to change the cultural markers of Tibet, which it has begun calling Xizang," Kalpit Mankikar, a China fellow at the New Delhi-based think tank the Observer Research Foundation, told *Newsweek* in an interview.

"The renaming of Mago (China renamed it as Moguo) in the eastern Tawang sector in Arunachal Pradesh is a signal to India that China is taking note of India's recent announcement to build a frontier highway opposite its border as it will be the starting point of India's new strategic border road." Nature Desai, an open-source analyst and observer of China-India relations, told *Newsweek* in an interview.

"Then there is the longest freshwater lake in Arunachal Pradesh, which was renamed," Desai told *Newsweek*.

### India's remote Ladakh protests against Beijing-Delhi squeeze

05 April 2024, [Nikkei Asia](#)



*Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk staged a three-week hunger strike seeking protections for India's remote Ladakh region. © AP*

Thousands braved sub-zero temperatures across India's remote Ladakh in recent weeks as they march for statehood and safeguards to protect a Himalayan region they say is increasingly squeezed by China and their own government.

Residents say Ladakh's glaciers and sensitive ecology are at risk due to Chinese encroachment and India's industrial and military buildup in the aftermath of a deadly 2020 border standoff.

The latest demonstrations stem from a 2019 decision to strip neighboring Jammu and Kashmir -- claimed by both India and Pakistan -- of its autonomy, resulting in Ladakh being separated from Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Delhi pledged to give Ladakh's mostly indigenous population safeguards for tribal people, but the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party hasn't followed through, critics said.

Among them is climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, who recently staged a three-week hunger strike, living on just water and salt.

"We are losing land, left, right and center," Wangchuk said in a video message to supporters. "The shepherds are losing their pasture land to China, which is encroaching from the north. The Chinese have captured huge chunks of Indian land in the last few years."

China has taken up more than 4,000 square kilometers of land, according to some critics. Wangchuk is planning another demonstration this weekend.

"To show the ground reality we're planning a border march of 10,000 Ladakhi shepherds to show live footage of how much of the pasture land has been taken over," he said.

China has repeatedly renamed places in another Indian border region, Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims as its own. This month, China criticized Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to the northeastern state

Earlier this year, a video surfaced on social media purportedly showing Chinese soldiers intercepting Indian shepherds in Ladakh and claiming the area belongs to Beijing.

In 2020, deadly clashes between Indian and Chinese soldiers erupted in Ladakh's Galwan Valley, leaving two dozen Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead after close-quarter fighting with clubs and rocks.

Since that clash, thousands of soldiers have been deployed on both sides of the de facto border, the Line of Actual Control (LAC). India and China have been building infrastructure at breakneck speed near the LAC as several rounds of talks between their militaries failed to ease tensions.

Delhi, meanwhile, has built a massive military infrastructure across the region, while signing at least 10 agreements with outside companies to develop Ladakh's natural resources.

These developments are stirring fears about outside influence and the impact on a fragile environment.

"They [the government] are planning to set up big industries in this fragile area, and if that happens it will be a disaster for this region," said Padma Stanzin, head of the Ladakh Students' Environmental Action Forum (LEAF).

With no significant progress on reducing border tensions, the region is at risk of stepped-up conflict, warns Praveen Donthi, a senior analyst at the International Crisis Group.

"There are around 50 to 60,000 troops on both sides of the border, which means that the border is live, unlike the pre-2020 phase," Donthi added. "There is a possibility of accidental escalation with far-reaching consequences."

India's Ministry of External Affairs said the countries are negotiating to reestablish calm in Ladakh.

"The discussions we had there [in Beijing] built on the previous rounds seeking complete disengagement in the remaining areas along the LAC in eastern Ladakh as an essential basis for the restoration of peace and tranquility in the India-China border areas," ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Wang Wenbin, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, said China viewed the border squabbles as something that can be resolved.

"China has stressed multiple times that the boundary question does not represent the entirety of China-India relations, and it should be placed appropriately in the bilateral relations and managed properly," Wenbin told a press conference last month.

Donthi, the ICG analyst, said a political solution was crucial to ease tensions.

"It is an intractable problem and one of the longest-running border crises in the world," Donthi said.

"There is a need for political leadership to take the initiative to resolve the crisis."

### **Assam CM proposes Tit-for-Tat response to China's gimmick**

03 April 2024, [Phayul](#)



*Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma  
(Photo /Maktoob media)*

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma suggested on Tuesday that India should rename 60 places in the occupied Tibet in response to recent actions by Beijing renaming 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh.

Speaking to journalists after a BJP election meeting in central Assam's Karbi Anglong, Sarma emphasized the need for reciprocity, stating, "My request to the Government of India is that we should give 60 geographical names for the Tibetan area of China. It should be always tit for tat but I do not want to comment because it is a policy decision of the Government of India, but if they name 30, we should name 60."

Pema Khandu, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, labelled China's actions as "another gimmick," expressing strong condemnation "Being a proud citizen of Bharat and a native of Arunachal Pradesh, I strongly condemn this act of naming places within Arunachal Pradesh which has been an inalienable integral part of India. Proud citizens and patriots of Arunachal Pradesh are rejecting such antics," he wrote on X (formerly Twitter).

Two days after Beijing assigned Mandarin and Tibetan names to 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh of India, New Delhi dismissed the move as "senseless". "China has persisted with its senseless attempts to rename places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. We firmly reject such attempts," Randhir Jaiswal, the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), said in New Delhi.

China had earlier renamed six places in Arunachal Pradesh of India in Mandarin and Tibetan in April 2017, 15 more places in December 2021 and 11 more places in April 2023. Beijing claims 90,000 sq. km of areas in Arunachal Pradesh of India as part of the territory of China and calls it Zangnan or south Tibet.

Beijing also claims a 2,000 sq. km area in the Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. New Delhi claims that China is illegally occupying about 38,000 sq. km of India's territory in Aksai Chin, which borders eastern Ladakh. Pakistan also ceded about 5,180 sq. km of India's territory in 1963 to China.

In April-May 2020, China initiated a provocative and unilateral action aimed at altering the status quo along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto boundary between occupied Tibet and India, particularly in eastern Ladakh. This move involved the deployment of a substantial contingent of troops from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). In response, the Indian Army was compelled to deploy additional forces to counter China's attempts to encroach upon Indian territory and push the LAC further westward.

Negotiations led to the withdrawal of front-line troops by both the Indian Army and the Chinese PLA from some areas. However, the standoff persisted at several points along the LAC. China has claimed that the mutual withdrawal of troops from Patrolling Point 15 (Gogra-Hot springs area) in September 2022 signalled the return to normalcy along the LAC in eastern Ladakh. This claim seems intended to pressure India into accepting the current situation in the Depsang and Demchok areas, where the Chinese PLA still restricts the Indian Army's access to several patrolling points along the LAC.

In December 2022, Indian Army soldiers prevented an attempt by the Chinese PLA to alter the status quo near Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh. China's continued efforts to assert territorial claims in the region signifies ongoing challenges to India's sovereignty as per critics, amid broader geopolitical tensions between the two nations.

### **India rejects China's renaming of 30 places in Himalayan border state**

02 April 2024, [Reuters](#)

NEW DELHI, April 2 (Reuters) - India rejected China's renaming of about 30 places in its northeastern Himalayan state of Arunachal Pradesh on Tuesday, calling the move "senseless" and reaffirming that the border province is an "integral" part of India.

Beijing says Arunachal Pradesh, which it calls Zangnan, is a part of South Tibet - a claim New Delhi has repeatedly dismissed. China similarly ratcheted up tensions a year ago by giving Chinese names to 11 locations in the state.

Troops of the nuclear-armed neighbours engaged in minor scuffles along their disputed frontier in the state in Dec. 2022, and tensions eased after extensive military and diplomatic talks.

Yet the state is frequently the cause of friction between the Asian giants whose ties have nosedived since a bloody border clash between their troops in the western Himalayas in 2020.

China, in a statement on Saturday, said it had standardised the names of about 30 places in what it calls South Tibet, "in accordance with the relevant

regulations on place name management of the State Council".

"Assigning invented names will not alter the reality that Arunachal Pradesh is, has been, and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India," foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on Tuesday.

On Monday, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told reporters that "changing names will not do anything".

"If I change the name of your house, does it become my house?" he said.

Last month, following a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the state to inaugurate infrastructure projects, China had said it was opposed to his activities in the region. India termed the arguments "baseless".

The U.S. also weighed in on the issue, saying it recognised Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory and "strongly opposed" any unilateral attempts to make claims on it by military or civilian "incursion or encroachments".

China had opposed these remarks, saying the matter "has nothing to do with the U.S.".

India and China share a 3,800 km (2,400 mile) border - much of it poorly demarcated - over which they also fought a bloody war in 1962.

Twenty Indian soldiers and four Chinese troops were killed in hand-to-hand combat in 2020, prompting both countries to fortify positions and deploy extra troops and equipment along the border.

Reporting by Sakshi Dayal; Additional reporting by Bernard Orr in Beijing; Editing by YP Rajesh and Michael Perry

### **China gives its own name to 30 more places in Arunachal Pradesh in cartographic extension of its Tibet rule**

01 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

In yet another provocative move, asserting cartographic sovereignty over the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh on the basis of its occupation rule over Tibet, China has on Mar 30 declared its own names for 30 more places in the territory it calls Zangnan (or southern part of Tibet).

The Ministry of Civil Affairs released the fourth list of standardized geographical names in Zangnan, reported China's official *globaltimes.cn* Mar 30, citing the ministry's official website. It said the announcement was for "30 additional publicly used place names in the Zangnan region".

The report did not list those names. However, according to the *scmp.com* Mar 31, the latest renaming covered 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of

land, all given in Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, the Roman alphabet version of Mandarin Chinese.

It noted that the ministry had last standardized the names of 11 places in Zangnan, using Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, in Apr 2023. That was the third list since 2017 when six placenames were announced, which was followed by the second list with 15 placenames in 2021.

The latest list followed the ministry's publication on Mar 15 of implementation measures on Mar 15 for the management of geographical names, which detailed the requirements for the translation of place names in ethnic minority or foreign languages into Chinese characters.

The measures, which will take effect from May 1, 2024, stipulate in Article 13 that "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorization."

And it was made clear that translation of placenames in foreign languages or minority languages should comply with standards formulated by related organs of the State Council, China's cabinet or council of ministers. Standard translations are made public through notices, the national database for geographical names and official publications on geographical names, according to the implementation measures.

This meant that "Tibet" should be referred to as "Xizang", "Arunachal Pradesh" as Zangnan", "Mt Everest" as "Qomolangma", and so forth.

The report also noted that the State Council had issued a revised regulation on placenames in Apr 2022, applicable to naming, renaming, usage, cultural protection and other management on geographical names within Chinese territories.

### **China renames 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh; Jaishankar says it means nothing**

01 April 2024, [Hindustan Times](#)

"If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine?" S Jaishankar said, asserting that Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will be a state of India. China has rechristened 30 locations in Arunachal Pradesh with Chinese and Tibetan names as part of its continuing efforts to assert claims over the north-eastern Indian state. This is the fourth time that China unilaterally changed the names of locations in the state. The new names will be reflected on official Chinese maps later this year. The renaming comes days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Arunachal where he inaugurated the Sela Tunnel built at an altitude of 13,000 feet, an infrastructure project that

is set to ease the movement of troops in the mountainous region.

India has repeatedly rejected the renaming of places in the past and dismissed claims over Arunachal, which Beijing has claimed is part of the southern region of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), called "zagnan".

"China may repeat its baseless claims as many times as they want. That is not going to change the position. Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said last week after Beijing protested Modi's visit.

The change in names will not have any impact on the places in the Indian state but is a marker of the state of ties between the two Himalayan neighbours.

Asked about the latest move, external affairs minister S Jaishankar told reporters: "If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect".

Renaming of locations

China's civil affairs ministry (MCA) released the new list of names on Saturday, Chinese state media reported.

Beijing last standardised the names of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh using Chinese characters, Tibetan and pinyin, which is the standard romanisation of Mandarin characters, on Chinese maps in April 2023. Earlier, China renamed places in the Indian state in April 2017, and in December 2021.

"Set to take effect from May 1, 2024, the implementation measures stipulate in Article 13 that 'place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims and sovereignty rights shall not be directly quoted or translated without authorisation,'" the state-run Global Times tabloid reported, quoting the government notice on the latest renaming.

"The renaming covered 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land," the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported, adding: "The new list includes more parts of the disputed area than the three previous renamings over the past seven years."

Bill Hayton, associate fellow at the Chatham House Asia-Pacific programme and author of books on China and Vietnam, told HT last year that China's practice of renaming places in disputed areas is an effort to "inculcate a sense of anxiety about the perceived loss of territory".

This dates back at least to the 1920s. Much of these claims are specious and demonstrate some misunderstandings of East Asian history. These misunderstandings have left a dangerous legacy in the modern era," Hayton had said.

In 2017, China changed the name of locations in Arunachal Pradesh on April 13, a day after Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama left Arunachal Pradesh following a high-profile nine-day visit. Beijing calls the Dalai Lama a splittist, and says he wants to create an independent country of Tibet.

India and China have been locked in a standoff in the Ladakh sector since early May 2020, sending bilateral ties plummeting to their worst in decades. Both sides have deployed thousands of troops and heavy armament along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

A deadly clash at Galwan Valley in June 2020 left 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese troops dead – the first fatalities along the LAC since 1975.

### **Tensions mount as India deploys 10,000 additional troops along its contested border with China**

01 April 2024, [WSWS](#)

As the India-China border conflict approaches its fifth year, New Delhi has “forward” deployed an additional 10,000 troops along its disputed border with China in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, Indian states that abut western Tibet.

This escalation heightens the risk of an all-out war between the nuclear-armed rivals. It was clearly coordinated with Washington, which Indian officials revealed last summer has pressed New Delhi to detail what support it would provide the Pentagon should the US go to war with China. It comes as the US is inserting itself ever more obtrusively in the India-China border dispute and is intensifying economic, diplomatic and military-strategic pressure on China, through Taiwan and its major treaty allies in Asia, Japan, South Korea and the Philippines.



*Tanks on the banks of Pangong Tso lake region, in Ladakh along the India-China border on Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021. [AP Photo/India Army via AP]*

Since May 2020 tens of thousands of Indian and Chinese troops have been arrayed against each other along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the undefined border between the two countries. On several occasions, Indian and People’s Liberation Army troops

have clashed where Chinese-held Aksai Chin meets Indian-held Ladakh, in what is far and away the most significant border conflict between the world’s two most populous countries since they fought a brief border war in 1962. In June 2020, 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed in hand-to-hand combat. In August of that year several thousand Indian forces captured “strategic heights” unopposed in an action that Indian government officials later conceded could easily have resulted in a major clash with Chinese troops and a rapid escalation to war. After a further skirmish in December 2022, New Delhi boasted that its forces had been able to repel what it claimed was a Chinese advance thanks to “real-time” intelligence from the US.

The situation remains highly volatile. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu supremacist Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) government have used the border conflict to dramatically expand India’s bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral military-strategic ties with Washington and its principal Asia-Pacific allies Japan and Australia, thereby further consolidating India’s role as a junior partner and frontline state of US imperialism in its war drive against China.

The new deployment of troops to Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh was announced as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was ending a March 5-8 visit to South Korea and Japan, where he emphasized enhanced military collaboration.

The troops are being relocated from the country’s western border with Pakistan, underscoring that New Delhi now views China, not its historic rival Pakistan, as its principal adversary. They are in addition to the 50,000 troops that Indian and China have each forward deployed since 2020 along the border, as well as sizeable numbers of tanks, warplanes and artillery. On both sides, there are continuous efforts to construct new fortifications, airstrips, roads, tunnels, bridges and rail links aimed at facilitating the swift movement of troops and supplies to the inhospitable Himalayan border region.

Despite nearly two-dozen rounds of bilateral talks, the most recent on February 19, the standoff continues, with each side stressing the other must pull back.

China’s response to India’s latest provocation has been relatively muted. Mao Ning, a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, stated that it would “not be conducive to easing tensions” and that “China is committed to working with India to safeguard the peace and stability of the border areas.”

## How Xi Jinping is consolidating his power by revamping Chinese military

30 April 2024, [First Post](#)

The turmoil in the organisational structure of China's military continues. The latest is the disbandment of one of the main forces that was formed less than a decade ago. On April 19, the PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) was disbanded and three new forces were formed, viz, the Information Support Force (ISF), the Aerospace Force, and the Cyberspace Force, with the already established Joint Logistics Support Force forming the 'fourth arm'. The PLA is thus now reconfigured as "four services [army, navy, air force, and rocket forces] and four arms [ISF, aerospace, cyberspace, and joint logistics]"

Turmoil in the nearly 97-year-old China's military is not unknown, however. As it brought the Communist Party into power in 1949, the Red Army turned into the People's Liberation Army (PLA), which is identified as the Communist Party's wing but known to bargain hard for privileges, defence budgets, representation, and participation in the decision-making bodies of the country.

Given its value as the "protector" of the party, the PLA sometimes showed its teeth or even threatened to slow down. In mid-1960s, it exhibited shantouzhu (mountain-topism)—sitting on the top of the mountain and out of the reach of the party's control mechanisms—in other words, becoming "independent".

In other times, it demanded its pound of flesh by filling up positions for the children of the Generals. Increasingly, it demanded higher defence allocations, specifically since the 1990s, making it the second largest spender in the world.

China's Communist Party is aware of the PLA's praetorian demands, leading to its gradual loss of power. Hence, the party has struck back periodically to keep the military confined to the barracks and assert its "absolute power".

Mao Zedong disbanded ranks and military grades in the mid-1960s. Deng Xiaoping accused the PLA of being "bloated, lax, and undisciplined" in 1979 and launched a programme for reorganising towards a "lean and mean" armed force. Deng disbanded over a million troops in the process, including Maoist elements.

Xi Jinping dismissed or even arrested several thousands of officers and soldiers in the name of curbing corruption, netting Jiang Zemin's proteges like Guo Boxiang, Xu Caihou, and others. Last year, China's defence minister, Li Shangfu, disappeared from public view, only to be replaced after several months by Deng Jun.

## COMMENTARIES



Rocket forces commander Li Yuchao, its commissar Xu Zhongbo, and its deputies Zhang Zhengzhong and Liu Guangbin as well were shown the door. PLASSF commander Ju Qiansheng went missing. The Aerospace department's officials, Liu Shiquan, Wu Yansheng, and Wang Changqing, were dismissed. Rampant corruption and dereliction of duty in PLA forces were seen as a threat to the civilian leadership under Xi and to the combat requirements.

Xi launched a major reorganisation of the PLA in December 2015 to "fight and win" future warfare based on China's core interests and acquiring regional and global hegemony. At the 19th Communist Party Congress, 2017, Xi ordered the PLA to become a "world class military" by 2049. The rump in the PLA is not tuned into these new requirements, leading to further reorganisations.

In pursuing global ambitions, Xi in December 2015 reorganised the PLA into five theatre commands, brought the four "General" departments (of staff, political, logistics and armaments) and the newly established PLASSF under the control of the General Office of the Central Military Commission (CMC). Yet, the PLA doesn't seem to be matching Xi's ambitions of becoming an expeditionary force firmly under his control.

Xi realised a "world-class military" cannot be raised with so much inefficiency and corruption in the PLA forces. Moreover, some of these units also went beyond their brief, blackening the political leadership's face. The Chinese balloon incident in early 2023, which was shot by the United States, exposed PLASSF's vulnerabilities and command and control problems. Likewise, the Yuan Wang 5 surveillance ship incident at Hambantota alerted India to the PLASSF's ambitions to enter the Indian Ocean. China's information operations across the world depleted its soft power.

It is also realised that the ISF should be a separate force, directly under Xi, as the demands of information warfare increased recently after the Ukraine and Israel-Palestine-Iran crises and cannot be subsumed under the overall umbrella of the PLASSF. Also, despite extensive and threatening deployments in the Taiwan Strait since August 2022, the PLA forces, including the PLASSF, were unable to make a significant dent in the region. The Galwan incident with India also exposed China's limitations in information dominance and logistics support.

Xi Jinping's tenure as Chairman of the all-powerful CMC witnessed increasing turbulence for the PLA forces, in part due to his global ambitions and the inability of the PLA to adjust to such demands. While Xi attacked rampant corruption in the PLA, specifically targeting rival political factional officers loyal to Jiang Zemin, recently this campaign targeted his own

appointees, highlighting vulnerabilities in civil-military relations.

The newly formed PLA ISF that was carved out of the PLASSF on April 19 has Bi Yi as the commander and Li Wei as political commissar. This reorganisation provides more for specialisation under the direct leadership of Xi. Given the lack of transparency in the PLA, it is hard to predict if further purges would be carried out in the "four services and four arms" of the PLA. The resulting uncertainty in the PLA is detrimental to peace and stability in China and beyond.

*Prof. S. Kondapalli, the author, is Professor in Chinese Studies at JNU. Views expressed in the above piece are personal and solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect Firstpost's views.*

### Are there really Chinese sleeper cells operating in the U.S.?

29 April 2024, [Politifact](#)

Is the Chinese Communist Party operating "sleeper cells" on American soil? That's what Rep. Elise Stefanik, R-N.Y., said in a recent social media post.

Stefanik, who as House Republican Conference chair is the third-highest party official under Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., decried Chinese nationals crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in a March 17 post on X.

Stefanik, who has closely aligned herself with former President Donald Trump, went on to say in the post that "we know the #CCP (the Chinese Communist Party) has set up sleeper cells in our communities. Joe Biden is asleep at the wheel as a hostile foreign regime is waging war on our way of life."

PolitiFact reached out to Stefanik — a member of the House Armed Services and Intelligence committees — multiple times but never received a response. However, terrorism experts said whether her assertion is accurate depends on how one defines "sleeper cell." We couldn't find any publicly available, official intelligence community definition of "sleeper cell," and we did not hear back from the CIA or the House Intelligence Committee. But the International Spy Museum, which has board members and advisers from the intelligence community, defines a "sleeper agent" as an "agent living as an ordinary citizen in a foreign country; acts only when a hostile situation develops."

This definition mirrors the image most Americans may have from pop culture: spies or terrorists who embed themselves in another country. These so-called sleeper agents pass themselves off as ordinary citizens as they await a call from their handlers — sometimes years later — with orders to undertake a mission such as sabotage or terrorism.

Experts told PolitiFact they are unaware of any efforts by China or its ruling Communist Party that fit this Hollywood version of a sleeper cell.

However, a looser definition of "sleeper cell" may fit a recent case of Chinese nationals who allegedly embedded themselves in Manhattan to operate an "illegal overseas police station," said Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, a terrorism expert who founded the security and technology firm Valens Global.

According to the Justice Department's April 2023 announcement of the charges, the effort was focused on intimidating Chinese dissidents. Like sleeper agents, the suspects worked undercover within an American community while doing the bidding of a foreign government.

But the case also presents differences with the popular conception of sleeper cells. The suspects allegedly targeted Chinese dissidents living in America, not native-born Americans; their endgame does not appear to have been a terrorist act against the U.S.; and the suspects' anti-dissident operations may have been ongoing, rather than having to await orders for a specific mission.

The overseas police station example

The existence of these overseas police stations had been bubbling up for a few years prior to the arrests. In September 2022, a Spanish human rights group, Safeguard Defenders, released a report alleging the existence of at least 54 secret Chinese police stations in 21 countries. In April 2023, U.S. media reports cited seven Chinese police stations in the U.S.: two in New York City, two in California, one in Minnesota, one in Nebraska and one in Texas.

That month, the U.S. arrested "Harry" Lu Jianwang, 61, of the Bronx, and Chen Jinping, 59, of Manhattan, on charges related to operating a Chinese police station in lower Manhattan's Chinatown neighborhood on behalf of a provincial branch of China's Ministry of Public Security.

The suspects were charged with "conspiring to act as agents of the (People's Republic of China's) government as well as obstructing justice by destroying evidence of their communications with" a Ministry of Public Security official, the Justice Department said in announcing the arrests.

"They were residents of New York City, they communicated with the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, they worked to establish this unofficial police station, they operated it clandestinely at the behest of the People's Republic of China, and it involved at least two people, which is the minimum for a 'cell,'" said Gartenstein-Ross, the terrorism expert. "That provides a number of aspects that would establish them as a sleeper cell."

The Chinese "police stations" don't fit other aspects of the popularly held definition

To the extent ordinary Americans have heard of sleeper cells, however, it's from pop culture — and such examples differ from the Chinese police stations.

The Chinese defendants don't appear to have been terrorists, unlike the sleeper cells from the 2005-2006 Showtime miniseries "Sleeper Cell" or another Showtime series, "Homeland."

In addition, the Chinese defendants appear to have been targeting Chinese dissidents, rather than natives of the country in which they embedded themselves. The latter was the modus operandi in the 1962 movie "The Manchurian Candidate" and the 2013-2018 FX series "The Americans."

It also appears that the two men arrested were pursuing their activities on an ongoing basis, rather than waiting for years to undertake a specific mission, which is a key element of the Spy Museum definition. Would China want to pursue a sleeper cell strategy against the United States?

Experts told PolitiFact that a Chinese-devised sleeper cell of the Hollywood variety seems far-fetched in today's environment. They said Stefanik's framing falls into the longstanding trope of a feared Chinese invasion.

"Stefanik is basically replicating old-school 'red scare' stuff, trying to provoke anti-China sentiment," said James J.F. Forest, the director of security studies at the University of Massachusetts-Lowell.

However, they added, other tactics seem more promising from the Chinese perspective. "A cyber-attack involving hackers that are already present and lurking in our networks is far more likely than a Chinese-directed terrorist campaign involving 'sleeper cells,'" Forest said. "That's not what China does, nor is it something they'd want or need to do."

Suzanne Ogden, a professor emerita of political science at Northwestern University, agreed.

Ogden said China has "so many thousands of students in scholars and others in this country that they don't really need so-called sleeper cells. In the age of computers, they can find out everything they want to know without doing what sleeper cells used to do."

### Why China disbanded once-touted Strategic Support Force: Implications for India

29 April 2024, [First Post](#)

With the intermediary SSF now having been removed, President Xi Jinping will have more direct control of the information domain

As a part of the most touted major security structure reforms, Chinese President Xi Jinping created the Strategic Support Force (SSF) in December 2015. And now, on April 19, 2024, the SSF met its death knell in yet another restructuring of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). The PLA now has three independent

branches: the Information Support Force (ISF), the Cyberspace Force, and the Aerospace Force.

China is known for its lack of transparency. Whether this change has been done to enhance military operational capability or to exercise greater political oversight and direct control over various elements is being analysed. Could corruption have played a part in Xi's decision, is being speculated.

The Ukraine conflict has surely highlighted the importance of the logistics and information domains. Space and cyber are other very dominant operational domains. Aerospace force could mean the partial merging of air and space domains. It may be recalled that China created the "Near Space Command" in November 2023.

#### Erstwhile SSF

The 2015 PLA reforms brought in major structural changes, including the formation of theatre commands. The then-newly created SSF was focused on space, counter-space, and information warfare capabilities. It was meant to improve the PLA's ability to fight what China calls "informatised conflicts" and to simultaneously enhance the PLA's power projection capabilities in space and cyberspace. SSF was designed to ease intelligence sharing and coordination with departments of the different branches.

The nearly 250,000 personnel force represented nearly 10 per cent of the military. The SSF was on par with the other military services and the PLA's five operational theatre commands. Later, the overall responsibility for national and joint military communication networks was also shifted to SSF control.

The SSF oversaw all units responsible for psychological warfare, information warfare, space warfare, cyberwarfare, and electronic warfare operations. With so many tasks, command and control were spread thin, and individual units were vying for resources. Also, the expertise required to command such a multifaceted force was complex.

The SSF consolidated all the PLA's space-based C4ISR systems. The conduct of strategic reconnaissance using the spy balloons flying in 'near space' was also part of the SSF domain. When the Chinese spy balloons shooting down became a public spectacle, Xi was reportedly unhappy with SSF. Splitting SSF will now allow more focus on each sector.

The SSF used to report directly to the all-powerful China's Military Commission (CMC), headed by President Xi Jinping. The SSF's previous mandate encompassed a wide array of responsibilities, potentially hindering operational effectiveness. It was therefore split within just a little more than eight years.

China's Military Commission and reduced layers

The CMC wanted to give independent focus and importance to information, cyber, and space domains as stand-alone forces. It is yet another pivotal step in PLA modernisation, what China now calls the "four services and four arms". The four services being the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Rocket Force, and the four arms include the Aerospace Force, the Cyberspace Force, the Information Support Force, and the Joint Logistic Support Force (JLSF). All these, in addition to the theatre commands, now report directly to the CMC, the top political party organ that oversees China's armed forces.

With the intermediary SSF now having been removed, Xi will have more direct control of the information domain. The new structure means the four forces plug into the PLA's joint operations system more easily due to fewer management layers. Operationally, the new structure is good for China's military. The SSF was as powerful as the PLA's five theatre commands. The current four support forces are now one level lower. The theatre commanders may have greater access to the support forces' assets without hierarchal complications. The four support forces, having become stand-alone, can now concentrate on their own specialised functionality with a reduced management layer.

The overall reform is much smaller in scale than what happened in 2015. The changeover will thus be smoother and faster. Clearly, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership places high priority on aggregating information and network operations.

#### Information Support Force

China emphasises that network information systems are the largest variable for improving the combat effectiveness of the military, as modern warfare is a confrontation between systems. The Information Support Force (ISF) will perhaps be responsible for the entire PLA's integrated computer architecture, including network information systems and communications support. The ISF will be responsible for command and control, information security, and intelligence dissemination. They will also coordinate the defence of their own cyber networks and be responsible for maintenance and repairs.

The military considers the information domain as important as the four traditional air, land, sea, and space domains. The ISF tasks are crucial for modern competitive warfare in contested domains. The ISF is China's answer to the US military's advanced network capabilities associated with Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2).

#### Cyberspace Force

The Cyberspace Force will be responsible for offensive cyber operations such as computer network attacks and active defence. Their mission will be to reinforce national cyber border defence, promptly detect and

counter network intrusions, and maintain national cyber sovereignty and information security. The force will concentrate on intelligence collection. The Cyberspace Force could one day resemble the US Cyber Command, thus allowing for a more effective employment of resources and expertise.

China has also been imbibing lessons from Russian structures. Russia also has a Cyber Command that reports directly to the Ministry of Defence. They have many dedicated cyber units. Russia has been training for live electronic, cyber, and informational confrontation and undertaking counter-propaganda efforts. China's Cyberspace Force bears a certain degree of resemblance to both US and Russian practices.

#### Aerospace Force

China has become a very significant space power and is fast catching up to the leader, the US. The Aerospace Force will take over SSF's Space Systems Department. The department managed backend systems for space-related affairs, but had overlaps with the Equipment Development Department and some elements within the Rocket Force and Air Force. Such overlapping organisational structures inevitably impeded operational efficiency. It was so much unlike the US' dedicated Space Force, which centralised all matters pertaining to space warfare. Xi Jinping may have possibly drawn inspiration from the US military's framework.

Now the Aerospace Force will supervise space operations and space launches and strengthen the capacity to safely enter, exit, and freely use space, albeit overtly for peaceful purposes. The Pentagon reports state that the PLA views space superiority, the ability to control the space-enabled information sphere, and the ability to deny adversaries their own space-based information gathering and communication capabilities as critical components of conducting modern warfare.

#### Indian defence reforms

As China pushes ahead with further military reforms, India too has made incremental changes. India set up the tri-service Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) in 2001 and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) in 2003. The Armed Forces Special Operations Division (AFSOD) integrated the Special Forces of the armed forces. In 2019, the Defence Cyber Agency (DCyA) and the Defence Space Agency (DSA) were created at the same time. These could one-day become full-fledged commands. There is an Integrated Defence Staff, and a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

The modalities for the formation of theatre commands are being worked out. The concept of Air Defence Command was deliberated and abandoned. The idea of integrated helicopter operations and integrated logistics is evolving. While some are exhibiting a high

degree of urgency, it is best to take small but firm steps and hasten slowly. Information warfare and electronic warfare need greater importance. China's defence production capability is coming of age. They already have home-grown stealth fighter aircraft and large transport aircraft and are making stealth bombers. India is making strong efforts to increase indigenous defence production. However, the same needs a greater push, even if it is through partnerships for high-end technologies.

#### Conclusions and implications

China is busy consolidating and refining its military structures, this time with a special emphasis on battlespace information control in a multi-domain integrated joint operations environment. The structural changes are not cosmetic. The move is clearly a strategic response to evolving security challenges and technological advancements.

The reforms reflect the evolving nature of modern warfare and the imperative to enhance capabilities in emerging domains such as space, cyber, and information warfare. Xi is trying to align the PLA with global trends and potential adversaries' structures, giving higher importance to information, space, and cyber operations. PLA will have to once again engage in extensive training and exercises to stabilise the new structure. The new structure throws up unforeseen challenges to operational effectiveness.

Beijing competes with Washington for military primacy in the Western Pacific. It also wants to keep the Line of Actual Control with India alive to stem India's unprecedented economic growth. India has witnessed significant Chinese cyberattacks. The frequency of attacks increased manyfold during the Galwan skirmish. China also has dedicated electronic warfare aircraft.

China's space launches are nearly 8–9 times more than India's. Chinese satellite communications, space-based intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and its own global satellite navigation system, the BeiDou satellite navigation system, greatly support military operations. In modern warfare, victory hinges on information. PLA employs a much larger force, with many in civil clothing, for this purpose.

Xi has repeatedly asked the PLA to modernise its readiness structure for high-tech combat and structure the military to 'fight and win' future wars. They have made another major structural change within a decade of the last major military reform. The international military competition is undergoing historic changes. New and high-tech military technologies are advancing constantly. Long-range precision, intelligent, stealthy or unmanned weaponry and equipment will change the way we fight wars. The US and India have reasons to study and understand the implications of China's military restructuring. New

Delhi must also look inward to accelerate India's own defence structural reforms.

### **The naming dispute between India & China**

28 April 2024, [Sunday Guardian](#)

By using Tibet, instead of the Chinese Xizang, India challenges China's unilateral renaming.

In the intricate ballet of geopolitics, names carry more than mere identification; they embody history, culture, and sovereignty. The recent decision by China to refer to Arunachal Pradesh as Tsang Nan or South Tibet, and to rename Tibet as Xizang, is a strategic move that extends beyond cartography into the realm of diplomatic signalling. This op-ed explores the implications of these actions and India's potential response.

Names are potent symbols in international relations, encapsulating the essence of a nation's stance on territorial disputes. China's choice to rename regions within Indian territory is not merely a linguistic exercise but a symbolic assertion of sovereignty. Such actions are provocative, touching upon the sensitive chords of territorial integrity and national identity.

India's response, maintaining the use of the name "Tibet," is a reaffirmation of historical and cultural recognition. By doing so, India not only challenges China's unilateral renaming but also underscores its commitment to respecting the historical context of the region. This stance is significant, as it reflects India's adherence to global norms and understanding, despite China's attempts to reshape international perceptions.

The term "Sinicization" denotes the process by which non-Chinese societies are influenced to adopt Chinese cultural, linguistic, and societal norms.

In Tibet's case, this process is a deliberate effort by the Chinese government to integrate Tibetan culture into the broader Chinese cultural framework. The renaming of Tibet to "Xizang" is a facet of these Sinicization efforts, aiming to solidify China's rule and dilute the Dalai Lama's influence and the global recognition of the Tibetan cause.

The international community, including governments and organizations, often weighs the historical and cultural context heavily when referring to regions. Despite China's renaming efforts, many continue to use the term "Tibet," aligning with the established global understanding. This collective stance is crucial, as it supports the cultural and religious identity of the Tibetan people against the tide of Sinicization.

The Indian government has firmly rejected China's attempts to rename places in Arunachal Pradesh, emphasizing that such actions do not alter the state's status as an integral part of India. This rejection is a clear message to China and the international

community that India stands firm on its territorial sovereignty. India's potential reciprocation, refusing to accept the name "Xizang" and instead using "Tibet," is a powerful diplomatic gesture. It is a declaration that India does not recognize the Sinicization of Tibet and supports the region's historical and cultural identity as known internationally. The naming dispute between India and China over Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh is more than a war of words; it is a reflection of deeper geopolitical tensions and the struggle for cultural preservation. India's stance, rooted in historical recognition and international law, serves as a bulwark against attempts to rewrite history and infringe upon sovereign rights.

As the situation evolves, the international community's role in upholding these principles becomes ever more critical, ensuring that names—and the identities they represent—remain respected on the global stage.

### **Billions in US investment goes to Chinese firms linked to CCP military, human rights abuses**

28 April 2024, [Fox Business](#)

Billions of investment dollars are going from U.S. financial markets to Chinese companies that have been blacklisted by the U.S. government over links to Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) military modernization and human rights abuses, according to a new report.

The bipartisan House Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the U.S. and the CCP released a report detailing how asset managers and index providers facilitated investment of more than \$6.5 billion to 63 companies in the People's Republic of China (PRC) that have been blacklisted or red-flagged by the U.S. government.

"These companies develop advanced fighter jets and nuclear weapons for the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and create technology used to perpetrate the ongoing genocide against the Uyghur people," the committee wrote. "What may surprise many Americans is that the activity by U.S. financial institutions described below is not illegal. It is time for Congress to act."

"Through the products of our own financial industry, Americans' hard-earned savings and retirement money are supporting the military modernization of a foreign adversary and the development of tools used by the CCP to violate human rights. Many investors have no idea," the bipartisan panel warned.

Under current law, U.S. government agencies maintain a variety of blacklists and red-flag lists that serve a range of purposes, from barring exports to covered foreign firms and blocking imports due to connections with the use of forced labor, to restricting purchases of

equipment that poses a national security risk and more.

Most of these lists do not restrict U.S. asset managers or investors from investing in listed companies. One list that does restrict U.S. investment in listed firms, the Treasury Department's NS-CMIC list, blocks investment only in listed firms but excludes those companies' subsidiaries, allowing them to receive U.S. capital.

Index providers like MSCI, the world's leading index provider, have created indexes used by fund managers and other investors that seek to mirror financial markets like those in China. In that process, they have the option of excluding firms at their discretion, but may opt to include the broadest possible selection of companies in a given market or to rely on the most widely-used benchmark index.

Those indexes are then used by asset managers like BlackRock, Vanguard and others to create investment products like exchange-traded funds (ETFs) or mutual funds centered on that index.

For example, BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, offers the iShares MSCI China ETF (ticker MCHI), which mirrors the MSCI China Index that covers about 85% of Chinese equities. The committee found that the ETF had assets under management (AUM) of about \$7.6 billion, of which about 3.01%, or \$230 million, is in Chinese firms flagged by U.S. government agencies.

BlackRock's iShares Core MSCI Emerging Markets ETF (ticker IEMG), which mirrors an MSCI index benchmarked to a number of emerging markets around the world including China, had about \$70.9 billion in AUM – of which 0.78%, or \$556 million, was in blacklisted or red-flagged Chinese firms per the committee's analysis.

Of the \$6.5 billion that the committee found invested in Chinese firms included on U.S. agencies' red-flag lists, nearly 59% was invested through asset managers Vanguard and BlackRock, which each accounted for about \$1.9 billion of the total.

"The existing regulations prohibiting investment in certain Chinese companies because of national security risks or human rights violations are insufficient," the committee wrote. "Congress must act to restrict U.S. investment in entities tied, directly or indirectly, to the PLA, critical technology sectors, or forced labor and genocide."

The committee recommended three policies for Congress to act on to address the shortcomings of U.S. restrictions on investment in certain Chinese companies, including:

- Restrict investment in companies blacklisted by the U.S. government, including subsidiaries, affiliates, parents and holding companies – including through the delisting

of PRC companies covered by human rights sanctions or implicated in Uyghur forced labor.

- Require U.S. public companies to disclose key risks related to investments in PRC securities, including differences in shareholder rights.
- Ensure the U.S. financial system is resilient to PRC market uncertainty through increased disclosures to investors about risks associated with the PRC market.

"Short of such action, billions of dollars of Americans' life savings will continue funding the PRC's military and human rights abuses, including the Uyghur genocide," the committee said.

Financial firms respond

"The Committee and its report confirm BlackRock complies with applicable U.S. laws, this matter reflects the entire asset management industry, and that Congress and the Administration must work together to create clear rules of the road for U.S. investors," BlackRock told FOX Business in a statement. "Despite fully cooperating with the Committee for more than eight months, its report includes misleading assertions about index funds, including that they are 'funneling billions of dollars' to these entities."

"We are pleased that the Committee acknowledges that MSCI indexes comply with U.S. laws and regulations," MSCI told FOX Business in a statement. "An index is simply a mathematical calculation of the performance of the market. An index does not, and cannot, channel investments, and MSCI does not manage or recommend investments in any country or company."

"If Congress or other government bodies expand restrictions on investment in China as recommended by the Committee, MSCI will assess applicable changes to our indexes in accordance with our methodologies," MSCI added.

"Vanguard maintains robust policies and procedures to ensure compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, including the rigorous sanctions laws maintained by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC)," Vanguard told FOX Business in a statement. "We stand ready to comply with any new regulations or compliance measures laid out by policymakers."

"Vanguard invests on behalf of 50 million individual investors and retirement savers, offering a wide array of investment options that can help investors meet different goals and objectives, including a range of funds to invest internationally. Our clients' investments in China are limited and primarily through U.S.-based passive index products that are designed to provide exposure to many diversified and developing economies around the globe," the company added.

## Xi's Imperial Ambitions Are Rooted in China's History

27 April 2024, [Foreign Policy](#)



*Then-U.S. President Richard Nixon with Chinese Vice Premier Li Xiannian, looking out over the Great Wall, circa 1972. BETTMANN ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES*

When Richard Nixon defied expectations and went to China in 1972, Henry Kissinger, his national security advisor, packed the president's briefcase. Among Nixon's reading materials was *The Chinese Looking Glass*, a book by British journalist Dennis Bloodworth about understanding China on its own terms. In his opening pages, Bloodworth sets the stage by going back to the beginning: "The gaudy catalogue of China's disasters and dynastic glories, whose monumental scale has given the Chinese much of their character ... brings us to our true beginning."

Kissinger, one of America's most consequential foreign-policy leaders in recent memory, clearly internalized the centrality of China's "true beginning." In his 2011 tome *On China*, Kissinger marveled at China's "singularity" and staying power. Indeed, even the hardest of hearts cannot help but be moved by the continuity of a civilization that predates the birth of Christ by hundreds, even thousands, of years.

Awe, however, is no substitute for knowledge. In the opening pages of *On China*, Kissinger writes of China's "splendid isolation" that cultivated "a satisfied empire with limited territorial ambition." The historical record, however, contradicts him. From the Qin dynasty's founding in 221 B.C. to the Qing's collapse in 1912 A.D., China's sovereign territory expanded by a factor of four. What began as a small nation bound in the fertile crescent of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers morphed into an imperial wrecking ball. In the words of Bloodworth, the very author Kissinger recommended to Nixon in 1972, "It would be absurd to pretend that the Chinese had never been greedy for ground—they started life in the valley of the Yellow River and ended by possessing a gigantic empire."

To be sure, China was not the aggressor in every war it fought. In antiquity, nomadic tribes regularly raided China's proto-dynasties. During the infamous Opium

Wars of the 19th century, Western imperialist powers victimized and preyed upon China at gunpoint. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regularly refers to China's "Century of Humiliation," when European empires brutalized China and killed or wounded tens of thousands of Chinese men, women, and children. Indeed, the party has memorialized these grievances in a permanent exhibit of the National Museum of China, just steps away from Tiananmen Square.

For all of Beijing's legitimate and long-standing security concerns, however, the sheer scope of China's expansion is undeniable. Western leaders often deny or ignore it, usually at the behest and prodding of Chinese leaders. When Nixon finally gained an audience with Mao Zedong, he reassured the chairman, "We know China doesn't threaten the territory of the United States." Mao quickly corrected him: "Neither do we threaten Japan or South Korea." To which Nixon added, "Nor any country." Within the decade, Beijing invaded Vietnam.

At the time, Nixon's gambit was to split the Soviet bloc and drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Nixon and Kissinger saw the Sino-Soviet split and took stock of the PRC's trajectory: a growing population that, once harnessed, was poised to dominate the global economy. It was textbook *realpolitik*: cold, dispassionate tactics divorced from moralism. If Washington could turn the Soviet Union's junior partner, the West could significantly hamper Moscow's ability to project power into Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia.

During the final years of Nixon's life, his presidential speechwriter William Safire asked him about that fateful trip to Beijing in 1972. Had opening up to the PRC made Americans safer and China freer? According to Safire, "That old realist, who had played the China card to exploit the split in the Communist world, replied with some sadness that he was not as hopeful as he had once been: 'We may have created a Frankenstein.'" Over time, many in the United States have come to realize this predicament. Unfortunately, articulating that problem well has proved difficult.

During her brief stint as director of policy planning at the State Department in 2019, Kiron Skinner previewed the shop's keystone intellectual project: a strategy to counter China, in the spirit of George Kennan's "containment" strategy. At a public event in April 2019, Skinner tipped her hand and revealed her philosophy of U.S.-China competition: "This is a fight with a really different civilization and a different ideology, and the United States hasn't had that before." She went on to add, incorrectly: "It's the first time that we will have a great-power competitor that is not Caucasian." Skinner received widespread criticism for these remarks and was soon after dismissed for unrelated issues.

Skinner's mistake was twofold. First, she simply got the history wrong and ignored imperial Japan in World War II. Of deeper consequence was her failure to explain what strategic culture actually is, why it matters, and how China's past shapes the CCP's behavior today. In fairness, these errors aren't unique to Skinner. Understanding Chinese history can be difficult for most Westerners. In some ways, it's difficult to think of two more different nations. The United States is less than three hundred years old.

China was unified more than two hundred years before Christ was born. Immigrants founded America. Denizens established China. The United States was born out of revolution against a colonial power. China came into being from a regional conflict of gigantic proportions. Favorable geography allowed America to grow economically and territorially on its own terms and at its own pace. China came into being surrounded by rival kingdoms and tribes on every side.

Americans turn to one source more than any other to make sense of these differences: *The Art of War*, by Sun Tzu. One of his more recognizable dictums, "All warfare is based on deception," has captured the imagination of many Western thinkers. Instead of investigating the history that informed Sun Tzu's counsel, however, many policymakers take the easier path of Orientalizing China. "China thinks in centuries, and America thinks in decades" is a well-worn trope. Another well-meaning but vapid cliché is, "America plays chess, but China plays Go."

These statements are often left untethered from history and offered as self-evident axioms. What's left are useless clichés that offer no actual understanding of why Chinese strategists advised cunning and deception, or how China's unique historical experiences informed military tactics. In the absence of curiosity, an impression easily forms of China as "the other," a mysterious, inscrutable competitor. A shallow understanding of Beijing's past leads to incomplete conclusions about its present behavior.

More often than not, policymakers find it easier to avoid China's history entirely. In late 2020, the policy planning office finished the 72-page report. It was a commendable attempt to reprise Kennan's strategic clarity, but China's dynastic strategic culture received a single page of attention.

Reducing strategic culture to vague racial differences helps no one except Chinese President Xi Jinping and his party henchmen. The CCP works to enmesh itself with the Chinese people and regularly uses them as a rhetorical human shield. To criticize the CCP, according to the well-worn rhetorical trope of Beijing's diplomats, is to "hurt the feelings of 1.4 billion people." As a matter of course, Beijing uses this specious logic to construe anti-CCP policies as evidence of racism. Years before former U.S. President

Donald Trump fell headlong into this trap with his careless rhetoric about the "Chinese virus" and "kung-flu," a young generation of China hawks had vowed to evade this pitfall.

Washington Post columnist Josh Rogin wrote about this resolve in his 2021 bestseller, *Chaos Under Heaven*, which documented the collective decision of Washington, D.C.-based China hands to blunt Beijing's attempts "to divide Americans by party or ethnicity, to divert attention from its actions." I was a regular member of those meetings and still believe America's leaders must differentiate the party from the Chinese people—not only out of respect for those who daily live under the CCP's jackboot, but also for the safety of Chinese Americans, who faced a rise of race-based crime in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. But, in doing so, America must avoid a separate trap: equating the party with China. China's history did not begin in 1949 when Mao and the CCP established the PRC. Nor did it start with China's "Century of Humiliation," when European imperialist powers forcibly opened China in the mid-19th century. Chinese civilization predates America and the West by orders of millennia. That context gives meaning to the party's contemporary behavior. The themes of greatness, fall, and restoration hidden in Xi's remarks in 2013 constitute the essence of Chinese history.

They are the four-act play of China's story, or "strategic culture"—without which it is impossible to understand the CCP's strategy today. Strategic culture explains how a country's unique experiences shape distinct national identities that translate into foreign policy. These three elements—story, identity, and policy—reinforce and shape one another. To be sure, the CCP has its own story, identity, and policies, but the party is one tributary in a long river. American leaders cannot prevail against the CCP without understanding the story and identity that belong to China.

From the start, China has been a civilizational juggernaut striving for political hegemony. China has often attempted to conceal this ambition with conciliatory diplomacy, but its neighbors know from experience the struggle to live—and survive—in the dragon's shadow. CCP diplomats often bully China's neighbors by claiming sovereignty over part or all of their territory "from time immemorial"—an inadvertent admission that the party is the latest crusader in a long line of imperialists. This struggle that was once relegated to the nations of East Asia is now a challenge for every country in the world.

Beijing is approaching the world not to embrace it, but to rule it. The Western world has no excuse for missing this reality, and American politicians have badly misjudged Beijing for decades. Washington's China policy will continue to be a "two steps forward, one



step back” affair until it reckons with the Middle Kingdom’s penchant for imperialism.

This reality calls into question the unspoken objective of American policymakers: seeking a democratic China. For all their differences, both hawks and doves in the United States have framed the “China problem” as an ideological challenge. Proponents of engagement believed that economic contacts would necessarily lead to political reform, a belief rooted in liberal internationalism. Advocates of confrontation couch the CCP regime as the problem, which implies an ideological solution.

The one unchanging constant in America’s China policy since Nixon’s meeting with Mao in 1972 is the steady commitment to regime change, either by commerce or competition. The underlying belief in the universal power of democracy has proved intoxicating. “If we can just make them like us,” the thinking goes, “we can turn an enemy into a friend.”

Perhaps this self-delusion is inevitable. America’s national identity is steeped in beliefs about liberty, equality, and opportunity. But the CCP’s heritage raises an uncomfortable question for the United States: Even if modern China were to become a democracy, would it cease to be the Middle Kingdom?

If the CCP collapsed and China followed Taiwan’s path of economic and political liberalization, would it suddenly lose its appetite for hegemony? Maybe. Then again, perhaps simplifying Beijing’s behavior to its current Communist Party overlords ignores thousands of years of China’s own history, as well as the strategic culture that informs those decisions.

### **Suddenly, Chinese Spies Seem to Be Popping Up All Over Europe**

27 April 2024, [NY Times](#)

One of the men, a young Briton known for his hawkish views on China, worked as an aide to a prominent member of the British Parliament. Another, a German citizen of Chinese descent, was an assistant to a member of the European Parliament representing Germany’s far right.

While from different countries and seemingly divergent backgrounds and outlooks, both men became ensnared this week in accusations of espionage on behalf of China — and a widening pushback in Europe against malign Chinese influence in politics and commerce. In all, six people in three separate cases have been charged this week in Europe with spying for China: two in Britain and four in Germany.

On Friday, as the two Britons made an initial court appearance in London, the U.S. secretary of state, Antony J. Blinken, met in Beijing with China’s leader, Xi Jinping, in the latest effort by the two rivals to keep

communications open even as disputes escalate over trade, national security and geopolitical frictions. The espionage cases in Britain and Germany, the first of their kind in two countries that once cultivated warm relations with Beijing, served as eye-catching exclamation points in Europe’s long, often anguished breakup with China.

Shortly after British and German officials announced that six of their citizens had been charged with espionage, the Dutch and Polish authorities on Wednesday raided the offices of a Chinese security equipment supplier as part of a crackdown by the European Union on what it sees as unfair trading practices.

It was the first time that the bloc’s executive arm, the European Commission, had used a new anti-foreign subsidy law to order a raid on a Chinese company.

In early April, Sweden expelled a Chinese journalist who had been a resident of the country for two decades, saying the reporter posed a threat to national security.

After years of regular tiffs over trade followed by reconciliation, Europe “has lost patience with China,” said Ivana Karaskova, a Czech researcher at the Association for International Affairs, an independent research group in Prague, who until last month served as an adviser to the European Commission on China.

China still has steadfast friends in the European Union, notably Hungary, she added, in “the multidimensional chess game” between the world’s two largest economies after the United States. But Europe, Ms. Karaskova said, has moved from a position of “total denial” in some quarters over the danger posed by Chinese espionage and influence operations to “take a less naïve view, and wants to defend European interests vis-à-vis China.”

Accusations this week that China was using spies to burrow into and influence the democratic process in Germany and Britain caused particular alarm, as they suggested a push to expand beyond already well-known, business-related subterfuge into covert political meddling, something previously seen as a largely Russian specialty.

But, according to China experts, those accusations and the flurry of charges this week indicated not so much that Beijing was ramping up espionage but that European countries had stepped up their response.

“Countries have been forced to get real,” said Martin Thorley, a British China expert and author of “All That Glistens,” a forthcoming book detailing how what London trumpeted a decade ago as a “golden era” of Sino-British friendship during the premiership of David Cameron made it easy for China to suborn politicians and businesspeople. The “golden era” has been widely mocked as a “golden error.”

Mr. Cameron, who is now Britain's foreign secretary, has in recent months become an outspoken critic of China. "A lot of the facts changed," he said during a visit to Washington in December, declaring that China had become "an epoch-defining challenge." His change of heart mirrors a wider shift across much of Europe in attitudes to a rising superpower that long counted on European countries, particularly Germany, to push back against what it denounces as "anti-China hype" emanating from Washington. Germany's security service has been warning publicly about the risk of trusting China since 2022, when, shortly after Russia started its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the head of its domestic intelligence agency, Thomas Haldenwang, told Parliament, "Russia is the storm, China is climate change." The agency, known by its German acronym, BfV, said in an unusual public warning last summer, "In recent years, China's state and party leadership has significantly stepped up its efforts to obtain high-quality political information and to influence decision-making processes abroad."

Germany's political leadership, however, has until this week been far more equivocal. Chancellor Olaf Scholz recently made a state visit to China, Germany's biggest trading partner, to discuss trade and market access.

But Germany's interior minister this week gave a blunt assessment of China's activities. "We are aware of the considerable danger posed by Chinese espionage to business, industry and science," the minister, Nancy Faeser, said. "We are looking very closely at these risks and threats and have issued clear warnings and raised awareness so that protective measures are increased everywhere."

China's foreign ministry responded by dismissing the accusations as a groundless "slander and smear against China," demanding that Germany "stop malicious hype" and "halt anti-China political dramas." Mareike Ohlberg, a China expert and a senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund in Berlin, said that "for a long time China was spared big public warnings." Now, she said, the German authorities are "more willing to call things out, or no longer have the patience not to call things out."

Three of the four people arrested in Germany this week, a husband and wife and one other man, appear to have been involved in economic espionage using a company called Innovative Dragon to pass on sensitive information about German marine propulsion systems — of great value to a superpower interested in building up its navy. They also used the company to buy a high-powered, dual-use laser, which they exported to China without permission.

The fourth person, in what prosecutors called "an especially severe case," was Jian Guo, a Chinese-German man who has been accused of working for China's Ministry of State Security. His regular job was

as an assistant to Maximilian Krah, a member of the European Parliament for the far-right party Alternative for Germany — a rising political force friendly to China and Russia — and its top candidate for elections in June.

Since then, the public prosecutor in Dresden has begun a "pre-investigation" into how much Mr. Krah knew of his employee's ties to China. On Wednesday, his party decided to keep supporting Mr. Krah's bid for re-election to the European Parliament but disinclined him from campaign stops.



*Maximilian Krah, a member of the European Parliament, spoke to reporters in Berlin on Wednesday after an aide was arrested in what prosecutors called "an especially severe case" of espionage. Credit Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters*

When Mr. Xi travels to Europe next month, he will skip Germany and Britain and instead visit Hungary and Serbia, China's last two staunch allies on the continent, and France.

Mr. Thurley, the British author, said the spying cases had sounded the alarm over Chinese activities but were only a small part of efforts by China to gain influence and information. More important than traditional espionage, he said, is China's use of a "latent network" of people who do not work directly for the Ministry of State Security but who, for commercial and other reasons, are vulnerable to pressure from the Chinese Communist Party and its myriad offshoots.

"This has been bad for a while and has been left far too long," he said.

The two men accused in London of espionage for China, Christopher Cash, 29, and Christopher Berry, 32, were arrested in March last year but released on bail and were not named publicly until they were charged this week.

Mr. Cash was a parliamentary researcher with links to the governing Conservative Party and a former director of the China Research Group, a body that often takes a hard-line view on China and hosts podcasts with critics of Chinese interference.

His former colleagues include Alicia Kearns, a member of the governing Conservative Party who heads Parliament's influential Foreign Affairs Committee, and

her predecessor in that role, Tom Tugendhat, who is now the security minister.

In a statement this week, London's Metropolitan Police said Mr. Cash and Mr. Berry were charged with violating the Official Secrets Act and had provided information "intended to be, directly or indirectly, useful to an enemy." It added, "The foreign state to which the above charges relate is China."

"It took a hell of a long time to wake up, but we finally see some movement," said Peter Humphrey, a British citizen whom China accused of illegally obtaining personal information while doing due-diligence work for the pharmaceuticals company GlaxoSmithKline, and who spent two years in a Shanghai jail with his wife.

He was in jail suffering from cancer when Mr. Cameron visited the city in 2013 with a delegation of British businesspeople. "It was sickening," recalled Mr. Humphrey, an external research fellow at Harvard's Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies. "Nobody in the higher levels of the British government," he said, "wanted to hear a bad word about China because of business interests."

### **The story of one of Buddhism's most revered figures, long missing, explained**

26 April 2024, [RFA](#)

The young boy who was abducted as a 6-year-old turned 35 this week.

What he does, where he lives or even if he's still alive isn't known, thanks to the reticence of the Chinese government, which kidnapped him along with his family and his teacher 29 years ago.

Beijing leaders, ever wary of potential rivals for the Communist Party's authority, viewed the boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, as a possible threat.

Days earlier the Dalai Lama had named him the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, the second-highest spiritual leader in the largest sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

Tibetan leaders marked his birthday this week with a celebration held in absentia, and reiterated long-standing requests to Beijing to reveal Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's fate.

Who is the Panchen Lama?

The word "Panchen" is based on a Sanskrit word for "Great Scholar." Traditionally the Panchen Lama has played a leading role in Tibetan Buddhist scholarship as the leader of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, the second largest city in Tibet, which has been controlled by China since 1951.

Buddhists believe that the Dalai Lama is a physical representation of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion, and the Panchen Lama of Amitabha, the Buddha of infinite light.

The two lamas share a special spiritual relationship, with each recognizing the other's successive reincarnations and serving as the other's teacher.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that the reincarnations of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama are revealed through a series of tests as judged by prominent religious leaders.

The Panchen Lama's most important responsibility includes finding and recognizing the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama in the event of his passing, one reason why China wants a Panchen Lama under its control.

What happened to the Panchen Lama?

On May 14, 1995, the exiled Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the Panchen Lama, the 11th reincarnation of his predecessor.

This angered Chinese authorities, who rejected the choice.

Three days later the boy, his family and his teacher were abducted. They have remained missing ever since.

For over 29 years, Tibetans, global leaders, and rights groups have called on the Chinese government to reveal their whereabouts, to no avail.

Who is the Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama?

Shortly after the abduction of the Dalai Lama-appointed Panchen Lama, Beijing installed another boy, Gyaltzen (in Chinese, Gyaincain) Norbu, as their own candidate in his place.

However, the Chinese government-appointed Panchen Lama remains unpopular with Tibetans both in exile and at home and is perceived as a "political tool" for Beijing.

Ordinary Tibetans and monks in monasteries traditionally loyal to the Dalai Lama have been reluctant to acknowledge or receive him, and during his visits to Tibet, Beijing has in the past handed out small monetary incentives for people who receive his blessing.

Significance of the Panchen Lama's role

China's appointment of Gyaincain Norbu as Panchen Lama underscores Beijing's attempts to interfere in the selection of the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama when he passes, and gain control and legitimacy among Tibetans, both inside Tibet and in exile, say experts.

The move is also seen as China's attempts to acquire more influence over Buddhism not only inside occasionally restive Tibet but throughout the Himalayan region. Beijing has increasingly looked to leverage religion as a soft power diplomacy tool across various Buddhist nations.

In 2007, the Chinese government decreed that China would begin overseeing the recognition of all reincarnate Tibetan lamas, or "Living Buddhas," including the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama, for which China plans to use its own Beijing-appointed Panchen Lama to sign off on.

## Significance of passage of Resolve Tibet bill'

25 April 2024, [Taipei Times](#)

The passage of the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, also known as the Resolve Tibet bill, by the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on Tuesday last week, to be sent to the US Senate for a vote, marks a pivotal moment in international relations, one that could significantly influence the geopolitical landscape of Asia, particularly affecting India's stance on Tibet.

This act, which has garnered substantial bipartisan support, underscores the unresolved conflict between Tibet and China, and asserts that Tibet's legal status is to be determined in accordance with international law. For India, the act serves as a reaffirmation of US support for the Tibetan cause, mirroring India's longstanding position of providing asylum to the Tibetan government-in-exile and the Dalai Lama. This alignment between US policy and India's historical stance could bolster New Delhi's diplomatic leverage in its negotiations with China, especially concerning border disputes and regional sovereignty.

The act's emphasis on the unresolved status of Tibet — a region that shares an extensive and contested border with India — might prompt a recalibration of diplomatic relations in the region. It could lead to increased solidarity among nations that recognize the significance of a peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China conflict, potentially forming a united front that advocates for the rights of the Tibetan people.

By advocating for dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China conflict, the act aligns with India's interests in maintaining regional stability. India's proximity to Tibet and the historical ties between the two regions mean that any escalation of tensions could have direct implications for India's security and its efforts to maintain peace along its borders.

The act's provisions to counter disinformation about Tibet could indirectly support India's narrative against unfounded territorial claims by China. By authorizing actions to counter such disinformation, the act not only defends the historical and cultural identity of Tibet, but also reinforces India's sovereignty over regions like Arunachal Pradesh, which China claims as South Tibet (藏南).

The emphasis on resolving the Tibet issue in accordance with international law might inspire similar approaches to other disputed territories. This could be advantageous for India, which has consistently advocated for a rules-based international order to address its border disputes with neighboring countries.

While the Resolve Tibet bill is a significant step, its true impact would depend on the subsequent actions taken by the US and other international players. The

responses from China and India would also play a crucial role in shaping the future of the region. The situation remains dynamic, and the geopolitical implications would continue to unfold over time. As the world watches, the act could serve as a catalyst for change, promoting the rights of the Tibetan people and encouraging a peaceful resolution to one of the longest-standing conflicts in Asia.

*Khedroob Thondup is a former member of the Tibetan parliament in exile.*

## China's Alternative Order

23 April 2024, [Foreign Affairs](#)

By now, Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambition to remake the world is undeniable. He wants to dissolve Washington's network of alliances and purge what he dismisses as "Western" values from international bodies. He wants to knock the U.S. dollar off its pedestal and eliminate Washington's chokehold over critical technology. In his new multipolar order, global institutions and norms will be underpinned by Chinese notions of common security and economic development, Chinese values of state-determined political rights, and Chinese technology. China will no longer have to fight for leadership. Its centrality will be guaranteed.

To hear Xi tell it, this world is within reach. At the Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs last December, he boasted that Beijing was (in the words of a government press release) a "confident, self-reliant, open and inclusive major country," one that had created the world's "largest platform for international cooperation" and led the way in "reforming the international system." He asserted that his conception for the global order—a "community with a shared future for mankind"—had evolved from a "Chinese initiative" to an "international consensus," to be realized through the implementation of four Chinese programs: the Belt and Road Initiative, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilization Initiative.

Outside China, such brash, self-congratulatory proclamations are generally disregarded or dismissed—including by American officials, who have tended to discount the appeal of Beijing's strategy. It is easy to see why: a large number of China's plans appear to be failing or backfiring. Many of China's neighbors are drawing closer to Washington, and its economy is faltering. The country's confrontational "Wolf Warrior" style of diplomacy may have pleased Xi, but it won China few friends overseas. And polls indicate that Beijing is broadly unpopular worldwide: A 2023 Pew Research Center study, for example, surveyed attitudes toward China and the United States in 24 countries on six continents. It found that only 28

percent of respondents had a favorable opinion of Beijing, and just 23 percent said China contributes to global peace. Nearly 60 percent of respondents, by contrast, had a positive view of the United States, and 61 percent said Washington contributes to peace and stability.

But Xi's vision is far more formidable than it seems. China's proposals would give power to the many countries that have been frustrated and sidelined by the present order, but it would still afford the states Washington currently favors with valuable international roles. Beijing's initiatives are backed by a comprehensive, well-resourced, and disciplined operational strategy—one that features outreach to governments and people in seemingly every country. These techniques have gained Beijing newfound support, particularly in some multilateral organizations and from nondemocracies. China is succeeding in making itself an agent of welcome change while portraying the United States as the defender of a status quo that few particularly like.

Rather than dismissing Beijing's playbook, U.S. policymakers should learn from it. To win what will be a long-term competition, the United States must seize the mantle of change that China has claimed. Washington needs to articulate and push forward its own vision for a transformed international system and the U.S. role within that system—one that is inclusive of countries at different economic levels and with different political systems. Like China, the United States needs to invest deeply in the technological, military, and diplomatic foundations that enable both security at home and leadership abroad. Yet as the country commits to that competition, U.S. policymakers must understand that near-term stabilization of the bilateral relationship advances rather than hinders ultimate U.S. objectives. They should build on last year's summit between President Joe Biden and Xi, curtailing inflammatory anti-Chinese rhetoric and creating a more functional diplomatic relationship. That way, the United States can focus on the more important task: winning the long-term game.

#### I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW

Beijing's playbook begins with a well-defined vision of a transformed world order. The Chinese government wants a system built not just on multipolarity but also on absolute sovereignty; security rooted in international consensus and the UN Charter; state-determined human rights based on each country's circumstances; development as the "master key" to all solutions; the end of U.S. dollar dominance; and a pledge to leave no country and no one behind. This vision, in Beijing's telling, stands in stark contrast to the system the United States supports. In a 2023 report, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed Washington was "clinging to the Cold War mentality"

and "piecing together small blocs through its alliance system" to "create division in the region, stoke confrontation and undermine peace." The United States, the report continued, interferes "in the internal affairs of other countries," uses the dollar's status as the international reserve currency to coerce "other countries into serving America's political and economic strategy," and seeks to "deter other countries' scientific, technological and economic development." Finally, the ministry argued, the United States advances "cultural hegemony." The "real weapons in U.S. cultural expansion," it declared, were the "production lines of Mattel Company and Coca-Cola."

Beijing claims that its vision, by contrast, advances the interests of the majority of the world's people. China is center stage, but every country, including the United States, has a role to play. At the 2024 Munich Security Conference in February, for example, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China and the United States are responsible for global strategic stability. China and Russia, meanwhile, represent the exploration of a new model for major-country relations. China and the European Union are the world's two major markets and civilizations and should resist establishing blocs based on ideology. And China, as what Wang called the "largest developing country," promotes solidarity and cooperation with the global South to increase its representation in global affairs.

China's vision is designed to be compelling for nearly all countries. Those that are not democracies will have their choices validated. Those that are democracies but not major powers will gain a greater voice in the international system and a bigger share of the benefits of globalization. Even the major democratic powers can reflect on whether the current system is adequate for meeting today's challenges or whether China has something better to offer. Observers in the United States and elsewhere may roll their eyes at the grandiose phrasing, but they do so at their peril: dissatisfaction with the current international order has created a global audience more amenable to China's proposals than might have existed not long ago.

#### FOUR PILLARS

For over two decades, China has referred to a "new security concept" that embraces norms such as common security, system diversity, and multipolarity. But in recent years, China believes it has acquired the capability to advance its vision. To that end, during his first decade in power, Xi released three distinct global programs: the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013, the Global Development Initiative (GDI) in 2021, and the Global Security Initiative (GSI) in 2022. Each contributes in some way to furthering both the transformation of the international system and China's centrality within it.

The BRI was initially a platform for Beijing to address the hard infrastructure needs of emerging and middle-income economies while making use of the Chinese construction industry's overcapacity. It has since expanded to become an engine of Beijing's geostrategy: embedding China's digital, health, and clean technology ecosystems globally; promoting its development model; expanding the reach of its military and police forces; and advancing the use of its currency.

The GDI focuses on global development more broadly, and it places China squarely in the driver's seat. Often working with the UN, it supports small-scale projects that address poverty alleviation, digital connectivity, climate change, and health and food security. It advances Beijing's preference for economic development as a foundation for human rights. One government document on the program, for instance, accuses other countries of the "marginalization of development issues by emphasizing human rights and democracy."

Beijing has positioned the GSI as a system for, as several Chinese scholars have put it, providing "Chinese wisdom and Chinese solutions" to promote "world peace and tranquility." In Xi's words, the GSI advocates that countries "reject the Cold War mentality, oppose unilateralism, and say no to group politics and bloc confrontation." The better course, according to Xi, entails building a "balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture" that resolves differences between countries through dialogue and consultation and that upholds noninterference in others' internal affairs. Behind the rhetoric, the GSI is designed to end U.S. alliance systems, establish security as a precondition for development, and promote absolute sovereignty and indivisible security—or the notion that one state's safety should not come at the expense of others'. China and Russia have used this notion to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine, suggesting that Moscow's attack was needed to stop an expanding NATO from threatening Russia. But Xi's strategy has taken flight only in the past year, with the release of the Global Civilization Initiative in May 2023. The GCI advances the idea that countries with different civilizations and levels of development will have different political and economic models. It asserts that states determine rights and that no one country or model has a mandate to control the discourse of human rights. As former Foreign Minister Qin Gang put it: "There is no one-size-fits-all model in the protection of human rights." Thus, Greece, with its philosophical and cultural traditions and level of development, may have a different conception and practice of human rights than China does. Both are equally valid.

Chinese leaders are working hard to get countries and international institutions to buy into their world vision. Their strategy is multilevel: striking deals with individual countries, integrating their initiatives or components of them into multilateral organizations, and embedding their proposals into global governance institutions. The BRI is the model for this approach. Around 150 countries have become members of the program, which openly advocates for the values that frame China's vision—such as the primacy of development, sovereignty, state-directed political rights, and common security. This bilateral dealmaking has been accompanied by Chinese officials' efforts to link the BRI to other regional development efforts, such as the Master Plan on Connectivity 2025 created by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

China has also successfully embedded the BRI in more than two dozen UN agencies and programs. It has worked particularly diligently to align the BRI and the UN's high-profile 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which has been headed by a Chinese official for over a decade, produced a report on the BRI's support for the agenda. The report was partially funded by the UN Peace and Development Trust Fund, which, in turn, was initially established by a \$200 million Chinese pledge. Such support undoubtedly contributes to the enthusiasm many senior UN officials, including the secretary-general, have shown for the BRI.

Progress on the GDI, GSI, and GCI has understandably been more nascent. Thus far, only a handful of leaders from countries such as Serbia, South Africa, South Sudan, and Venezuela have offered rhetorical support for the GCI's notion that the diversity of civilizations and development paths should be respected—and by extension, for China's vision for an order that does not give primacy to the values of liberal democracies.

The GDI has gained more international support than the GCI. After Xi announced the project before the UN General Assembly, China developed a "Group of Friends of the GDI" that now boasts more than 70 countries. The GDI has advanced 50 projects and pledged 100,000 training opportunities for officials and experts from other countries to travel to China and study its systems. These training opportunities are designed to promote China's advanced technologies, its management experiences, and its development model. China has also succeeded in formally linking the GDI to the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and held GDI-related seminars with the UN Office for South-South Cooperation. Beijing, in other words, is weaving the program into the fabric of the international governmental system.

The GSI has achieved even greater rhetorical buy-in. According to China's Foreign Ministry, more than 100 countries, regional organizations, and international organizations have supported the GSI, and Chinese officials have encouraged the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), ASEAN, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to adopt the concept. At the SCO's September 2022 meeting, China advanced the GSI and received support from all the members except India and Tajikistan.

#### MASS APPEAL

China, in contrast with the United States, invests heavily in the diplomatic resources necessary to market its initiatives. It has more embassies and representative offices around the globe than any other country, and Chinese diplomats frequently speak at conferences and publish a stream of articles about China's various initiatives in local news outlets.

This diplomatic apparatus is supported by equally sprawling Chinese media networks. China's international news network, CGTN, has twice as many overseas bureaus as CNN, and Xinhua, the official Chinese news service, has over 180 bureaus globally. Although Chinese media are often perceived in the West as little more than crude propaganda tools, they can advance a positive image of China and its leadership. In a study published in 2024, a team of international scholars surveyed more than 6,000 respondents in 19 countries to see whether China or the United States was more effective at selling its political and economic model and its role as a global leader. At baseline, participants overwhelmingly preferred the United States—83 percent of the interviewees preferred the U.S. political model, 70 percent preferred the U.S. economic model, and 78 percent preferred U.S. leadership. But when they were exposed to Chinese media messaging—whether only to China's or to Chinese and U.S. government messaging in a head-to-head competition—participants preferred the Chinese models to those of the United States.

Beijing also draws heavily on the strength of state-owned companies and the country's private sector to promote its objectives. China's technology firms, for instance, not only provide digital connectivity to a variety of countries; they also enable states to emulate elements of Beijing's political model. According to Freedom House, representatives from 36 countries have participated in Chinese government training sessions on how to control media and information on the Internet. In Zambia, adopting a "China way" for Internet governance—as a former government minister described it—resulted in the imprisonment of several Zambians for criticizing the president online. German Council on Foreign Relations experts revealed that Huawei middleboxes blocked websites in 17

countries. The more states adopt Chinese norms and technologies that suppress political and civil liberties, the more Beijing can undermine the current international system's embrace of universal human rights.

In addition, Xi has enhanced the role of China's security apparatus as a diplomatic tool. China's People's Liberation Army is conducting exercises with a growing number of countries and offering training to militaries throughout the developing world. Last year, for example, China brought more than 100 senior military officials from almost 50 African countries and the African Union to Beijing for the third China-Africa Peace and Security Forum. China and the African participants agreed to hold more joint military exercises, and they embraced the BRI and the GSI, alongside the African Union's Agenda 2063 development plan, as a way to pursue economic development, promote peace, and ensure stability on the continent. Together, these arrangements help create the collaborative security system China wants: one that's based on Beijing.

China has boosted its strategy by being both patient and opportunistic. Beijing provides massive resources for its initiatives, reassuring other countries of its long-term support and enabling Chinese officials to act quickly when opportunities arise. For example, Beijing first announced a version of the Health Silk Road in 2015, but it garnered little attention. In 2020, however, China used the COVID-19 pandemic to breathe new life into the project. Xi delivered a major address before the World Health Assembly promoting China as a hub for medical resources. Beijing paired Chinese provinces with different countries and had the former send personal protective equipment and medical professionals to the latter. China also used the pandemic to push Chinese digital health technologies and traditional Chinese medicine—a priority for Xi—as ways to treat the virus.

More recently, China has used Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting Western sanctions to push de-dollarizing the global economy. China's trade with Russia is now mostly settled in renminbi, and Beijing is working through the BRI and multilateral organizations, such as the BRICS (which 34 countries have expressed interest in joining), to advance de-dollarization. As Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said during a 2023 visit to China, "Every night I ask myself why al

ll countries have to base their trade on the dollar. Why can't we do trade based on our own currencies?"

#### THE PAYOFF

Beijing has clearly made progress in gaining rhetorical buy-in from other countries, as well as from UN organizations and officials. But in terms of effecting actual change on the ground, garnering support from

other countries' citizens, and influencing the reform of international institutions, China's record is more mixed.

The GDI, for its part, is well on its way. A two-year progress report produced by the Xinhua News Agency's think tank indicated that 20 percent of the GDI's initial 50 cooperation programs had been completed, and an additional 200 had been proposed. Some projects are highly local and long term, but others will have a greater immediate impact, such as a wind power project in Kazakhstan that will meet the energy needs of more than one million households. Despite the relative nascence of the GSI, Wang, China's foreign minister, quickly claimed that the Beijing-brokered 2023 rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia was an example of the GSI's principle of promoting dialogue. China has had less success, however, using GSI principles in its attempts to resolve the war in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Moreover, some countries have expressed concern that the GSI is a kind of military alliance. Despite being an early beneficiary of GDI projects, for example, Nepal has resisted multiple Chinese entreaties to join the GSI because it does not want to be part of any security alliance.

The BRI has transformed the geostrategic and economic landscape throughout much of Africa, Southeast Asia, and, increasingly, Latin America. Huawei, for example, provides 70 percent of all the components in Africa's 4G telecommunications infrastructure. In addition, China's 2023 BRI investments have increased from 2022. There are signs, however, that the BRI's influence may be plateauing. Italy, the biggest economy in the initiative (aside from China itself), withdrew in December, and only 23 leaders attended the 2023 Belt and Road Forum, compared with 37 in 2019. China's financing for the BRI has fallen sharply since its peak in 2016, and many BRI recipient countries are struggling to repay Beijing's loans.

Public opinion polls paint a similarly mixed picture. The Pew poll indicated that middle-income economies, particularly in Africa and Latin America, are more likely to have positive views of China and its contributions to stability than higher-income economies in Asia and Europe. But even in these regions, popular views of China are far from uniformly positive.

A 2023 survey of 1,308 elites in ASEAN states, for instance, reveals that although China is considered the most influential economic and security actor in the region, majorities in every country, except Brunei, express concern over China's rising influence. Pluralities or majorities in seven of ten countries do not believe that the GSI will benefit their region. And when asked whether they would align with China or with the United States if forced to choose, majorities

in seven of ten ASEAN countries selected the United States.

Afrobarometer's 2019 and 2020 surveys suggest China has a more positive reputation in Africa: 63 percent of Africans polled in 34 countries believe China is a positive external influence. But only 22 percent believe China is the best model for future development, and approval of China's model declined from the 2014 and 2015 surveys.

A 2021 survey of 336 opinion leaders from 23 countries in Latin America was similarly telling. Although 78 percent of respondents believe China's overall influence in the region is high, only 35 percent have a good or very good opinion of China. (Respondents have similar opinions about the United States.) There was support for engagement with China on trade and foreign direct investment but minimal support for engagement on multilateral cooperation, international security, and human rights.

Finally, support for China and Chinese-backed initiatives in the United Nations is mixed. For example, a detailed study of China's Digital Silk Road investment in Africa found that although eight African DSR members supported China's New IP proposal for increasing state control over the Internet, more African DSR members did not write in support of it. And the February 2023 vote to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine—in which 141 countries voted in favor, seven voted against, and 32, including China and all other members of the SCO except Russia, abstained—suggests widespread rejection of the GSI's principle of indivisible security. Nonetheless, China won the support of 25 of the 31 emerging and middle-income countries (not including itself) in the UN Human Rights Council in a successful bid to prevent debate on Beijing's treatment of its Uyghur minority population. It was only the second time in the council's history that a debate has been blocked.

#### FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE

Support for China's efforts may appear shallow among many segments of the international community. But China's leaders express great confidence in their transformative vision, and there is significant momentum behind the basic principles and policies proposed in the GDI, GSI, and GCI among members of BRICS and the SCO, as well as among nondemocracies and African countries. China's wins within bigger organizations—such as the UN—may seem minor, but they are accumulating, giving Beijing substantial authority inside major institutions that many emerging and middle-income economies value. And Beijing has a formidable operational strategy for achieving its desired transformation, along with the capability to coordinate policy at multiple levels of government over a long period.



Part of why Beijing's efforts are catching on is that the present, U.S.-led system is unpopular in much of the world. It does not have a good record of meeting global challenges such as pandemics, climate change, debt crises, or food shortages—all of which disproportionately affect the planet's most vulnerable people. Many countries believe that the United Nations and its institutions, including the Security Council, do not adequately reflect the world's distribution of power. The international system has also not proved capable of resolving long-standing conflicts or preventing new ones. And the United States is increasingly viewed as operating outside the very institutions and norms it helped create: deploying widespread sanctions without Security Council approval, helping weaken international bodies such as the World Trade Organization, and, during the Trump administration, withdrawing from global agreements. Finally, Washington's periodic framing of the world system as one divided between autocracies and democracies alienates many countries, including some democratic ones.

Even if its vision is not fully realized, unless the world has a credible alternative, China can take advantage of this dissatisfaction to make significant progress in materially degrading the current international system. The uphill battle the United States has waged to persuade countries to avoid Huawei telecommunications equipment is an important lesson in addressing a problem before it arises. It would be far more difficult to overturn a global order that has devalued universal human rights in favor of state-determined rights, significantly de-dollarized the financial system, widely embedded state-controlled technology systems, and deconstructed U.S.-led military alliances.

The United States should therefore move aggressively to position itself as a force for system change. It should take a page from China's playbook and be opportunistic—seeking strategic advantage as China's economy is faltering and its political system is under stress. It should acknowledge that, as Xi has repeatedly said, there are changes in the world “the likes of which we haven't seen for 100 years” but make clear that these shifts do not signal the decline of the United States. Instead, they are in line with Washington's own dynamic vision for the future.

The vision should begin by advancing an economic and technological revolution that will transform the world's digital, energy, agricultural, and health landscapes in ways that are inclusive and contribute to shared global prosperity. This will require new norms and institutions that integrate emerging and middle-income economies into resilient and diversified global supply chains, innovation networks, clean manufacturing ecosystems, and information and data

governance regimes. Washington should promote a global conversation on its vision of technologically advanced change rooted in high standards, the rule of law, transparency, official accountability, and sustainability—norms of shared good governance that are not ideologically laden. Such a discussion would likely be widely popular, just as China's focus on the imperative of development holds broad appeal.

Washington has put in place some of the building blocks of this vision through the U.S.-EU Trade and Technology Council, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment. Largely left out of the equation, however, are precisely the states most open to China's vision of transformation—most members of the BRICS, the SCO, and nondemocratic emerging and middle-income economies. Together with these countries, Washington should explore regional arrangements akin to those it has established with its Asian and European partners. More countries should be brought into the networks Washington is establishing to build stronger supply chains, such as those created by the CHIPS and Science Act. And countries such as Cambodia and Laos, left out of relevant existing arrangements such as the Indo-Pacific framework, should be given a path to membership. This would expand the United States' development footprint, allowing it to provide a development trajectory that is different from Beijing's BRI and GDI and—unlike China's initiatives—offers participating countries an opportunity to help develop the rules of the road.

[Artificial intelligence](#) presents a unique opportunity for the United States to signal a new, more inclusive approach. As its full applications become appreciated, AI will require new international norms and potentially new institutions to harness its positive effects and limit its negative ones. The United States, which is the world's leading AI innovator, should engage up front with countries other than its traditional allies and partners to develop regulations. Joint U.S.-EU efforts regarding skills training for the next generation of AI jobs, for example, should be expanded to include the global majority. The United States can also support engagement between its robust private sector and civil society organizations and their counterparts in other countries—a multistakeholder approach that China, with its “head of state” style of diplomacy, typically eschews.

This effort will require Washington to draw more effectively on the U.S. private sector and civil society—much as China has worked its state-owned enterprises and private sector into the BRI and GDI—by fostering vibrant, state-initiated but business-and-civil-society-driven international partnerships. In most of the world, including Africa and Latin America, the United

States is a larger and more desired source of foreign direct investment and assistance than China. And Washington has left untapped a significant alignment of interests between its strategic goals and the economic objectives of the private sector, such as creating political and economic environments abroad that enable U.S. companies to flourish. Because American companies and foundations are private actors, however, the benefits of their investments do not redound to the U.S. government. Institutionalizing public-private partnerships can better link U.S. objectives with the strength of the American private sector and help ensure that initiatives are not cast aside during political transitions in Washington. The work of private foundations in the United States—which invest billions of dollars in emerging economies and middle-income countries—should similarly be amplified by American officials and lifted up through partnerships with Washington.

More inclusive global governance also requires that Washington consider potential tradeoffs as other countries' economies and militaries grow relative to those of the United States. In the near term, for example, a clearer delineation of the limits of U.S. sanctions policy could help slow the momentum behind Beijing's de-dollarization effort. But Washington should use this time to assess the viability of the dollar's dominance over the longer term and consider what steps, if any, U.S. officials should take to try to preserve it. Washington's vision may also need to incorporate reforms to the current alliance system. The hard realities of China's growing military prowess and its economic support for Russia during the latter's war against Ukraine make clear that Washington and its allies must think anew about the security structures necessary to manage a world in which Beijing and its like-minded partners operate as soft, and potentially hard, military allies.

As with China, the United States needs to spend more on the foundations of its competitiveness and national security to succeed over the long term. Although defensive policies are often necessary, they grant only short-term protections. This means Washington must staff up to match Beijing's foreign policy apparatus. Around 30 U.S. embassies and missions have no sitting U.S. ambassador; each of these slots must be filled. The United States has taken the first steps to enhance its economic competitiveness with programs such as the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act, but it needs sustained investment in research and development and advanced manufacturing. It also needs to adopt immigration policies that attract and retain top talent from around the world. And Washington needs to recommit to investing in the foundations of its long-term military capabilities and modernization. Without bipartisan support for the

basic building blocks of American competitiveness and global leadership, Beijing will continue to make headway in changing the global order.

Finally, to avoid unnecessary friction, the United States should continue to stabilize the U.S.-Chinese relationship by defining new areas for cooperation, expanding civil society engagement, tamping down needless hostile rhetoric, strategically managing its Taiwan policy, and developing a clear message on the economic tools it uses to protect U.S. economic and national security. This will enable the United States to maintain relations with those in China who are concerned about their country's current trajectory, as well as give Washington room to focus on building up its economic and military capabilities while moving forward with its own global vision.

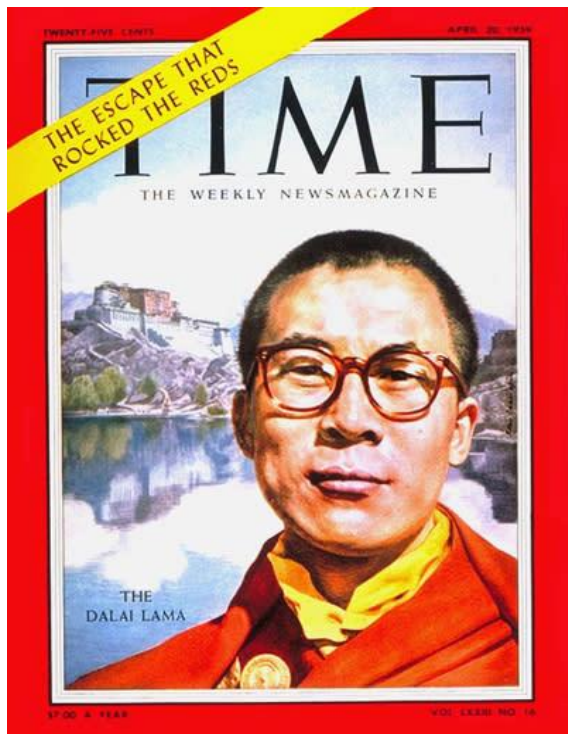
China is right: the international system does need reform. But the foundations for that reform are best found in the openness, transparency, rule of law, and official accountability that are the hallmarks of the world's market democracies. The global innovation and creativity necessary to solve the world's challenges thrive best in open societies. Transparency, the rule of law, and official accountability are the foundation of healthy, sustained global economic growth. And the current system of alliances, although insufficient to ensure global peace and security, has helped prevent war from breaking out among the world's great powers for more than 70 years. China has not yet managed to convince a majority of the planet's people that its intentions and capabilities are the ones needed to shape the twenty-first century. But it is up to the United States and its allies and partners to create an affirmative and compelling alternative.

### **Why the Dalai Lama's Message Still Resonates Today**

23 April 2024, [AoL](#)

In addition to co-founding TIME—96 years ago this week—Henry Luce is most famous for articulating his vision of the American Century. And while that vision takes its name from the U.S., its real focus—closely informed by his formative years abroad in China as the son of missionaries—was the shape of the world.

Today, TIME continues to take measure of the world by providing our readers unparalleled access to its most influential figures. Since November 2017, led by International Editor Dan Stewart, TIME has published 15 interviews with leaders and leaders-to-be guiding their nations through this extraordinary period of global transformation.



The Apr. 20, 1959, cover of TIME | Cover Credit: BORIS CHALIAPIN

These include conversations with the leaders of France, Saudi Arabia, New Zealand, Colombia, Argentina, Thailand, Italy, Brazil (“I am not a troglodyte!” Jair Bolsonaro volunteered during his time with us), Armenia, Pakistan, Iraq, Austria (the world’s youngest head of government), Malaysia (the world’s oldest) and of course the U.S. For this week’s issue, Shanghai-based correspondent Charlie Campbell traveled to Dharamsala, in the Indian Himalayas, for a conversation with the spiritual leader of one of the world’s most secluded peoples, the Tibetans. Even as China continues to isolate him and attempts to co-opt Buddhism for its own purposes, Charlie says, “The Dalai Lama didn’t show an iota of bitterness, not to the Chinese government, nor the British or Americans who abandoned Tibet, nor anyone else.” Charlie’s story is accompanied by Ruven Afanador’s intimate photographs taken in and around the Dalai Lama’s private residence, and you can watch video of the interview here. This is in fact the third time the Dalai Lama has been on the cover of TIME. The first was in 1959, the year the Dalai Lama, then 23, fled Tibet disguised as a soldier. In 2008, the great travel writer and TIME contributor Pico Iyer profiled him again as China cracked down on Tibetan freedom demonstrations ahead of the Beijing Olympics. The Buddhist message of interdependence is a powerful one for today, when so many of our challenges are global and yet so much of our globe is deeply fragmented. “The Dalai Lama came across as a kind, genuine, fun-loving person,” says Charlie, who has interviewed the leaders of the Philippines, South

Korea and Thailand, among others. “He’s one of a kind.”

### Beyond Borders: China’s attempts to censor global Academia

22 April 2024, [Human Rights Foundation](#)

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is dedicated to perfecting its global narrative, employing a combination of coercion and co-optation tactics to shape public discourse both within China and abroad. As part of its strategy, Beijing has increasingly intimidated global academia, targeting both individual scholars and higher education institutions. This includes Beijing’s regulation of academic activities through government-funded programs and informal networks and the erosion of the academic institutions’ autonomy by promoting financial dependency.

#### Infiltrating Academia: Students and Scholars

A key player in this strategy is the United Front Work Department (UFWD), a CCP agency focused on influence operations and intelligence activities. Central to its mission is the orchestration of China’s work abroad, aimed at establishing a global network to influence local politics, economics, diaspora communities, and academia. The UFWD has a significant presence within global academia, seeking to ensure that critical voices are either co-opted or coerced into silence.

In 2015, Chinese dictator Xi Jinping acknowledged overseas Chinese students as a new key focus of UFWD’s overseas operations, recognizing them as valuable assets for managing foreign discourse. Xi’s approach requires these students to align their personal aspirations with the overarching vision of the “Chinese Dream,” urging them to acquire knowledge abroad that benefits the regime and “serve their nation” both abroad and upon their return.

#### CCP-Sponsored Scholarships

The China Scholarship Council (CSC) is one of many scholarship providers in China. It distributes funding to thousands of Chinese students pursuing studies abroad and international students studying in China each year. Overseen by the UFWD, the CSC operates as a nonprofit organization affiliated with China’s Ministry of Education.

Under the CSC scholarship, students are obligated to adhere to CCP directives. Scrutiny of the CSC intensified after Swedish media revealed the loyalty pledge recipients were required to sign. Applicants are explicitly required to endorse the CCP’s leadership, comply with Xi’s “Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” undergo an assessment of their political ideology, and accept the “guidance and management” of Chinese diplomats, including declaring allegiance to the CCP and maintaining

regular contact with the embassy. Should students fail to comply or engage in actions deemed detrimental to national interests, they and their families may face penalties.

Despite the lack of academic independence inherent in CSC scholarships, fully funded CSC doctoral students are financially attractive to universities abroad. For instance, in the Netherlands, while CSC scholarships cover recipients' tuition and living expenses, the universities receive bonuses from the Dutch Government for each successfully defended PhD dissertation.

Amid criticism, CSC recipients have defended their scholarship requirements, stating that these are common in contracts in China and only have "symbolic meaning."

#### **Military Linked Research**

Universities have also expressed concern over research supporting the Chinese military, as evidenced by several well-known universities in Sweden, Germany, Denmark, and the US cutting ties with such government-funded programs.

Under Xi's strategy of "Military-Civil Fusion" (MCF), the CCP has made substantial investments in science and technology to realize a "world-class" military by 2050. This doctrine, directly overseen by Xi, mandates that independent research, including by Chinese science and technology enterprises, must serve to advance China's economic and military development.

As part of this effort, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) sends thousands of military personnel for educational exchange abroad before returning to China's military system — called "picking flowers in foreign lands to make honey in China" (异国采花中华酿蜜).

In the Netherlands, more than 90 Chinese military scientists have studied as PhD students over the past decade, most returning to China's military system afterward. Some students confirmed that their purpose was to learn groundbreaking science and technology to serve their military.

**Deutsche Welle's** research reveals that 26 prominent Chinese researchers in Germany — in fields such as mathematics, computer science, natural sciences, and technology — were employed at elite universities with close ties to the Chinese military. Twenty-two returned to China through the Thousand Talents Plan (TTP)<sup>1</sup>, the CCP's flagship talent recruitment program aimed at top scientists in fields relevant to MCF. A 2022 investigation found that nearly 3,000 scientific publications were collaborations between European researchers and military universities in China.

Scientists sent by Chinese military-affiliated universities, whether for short-term exchanges, PhD studies, or collaborative research, typically specialize in fields crucial to the MCF scheme, such as artificial

intelligence, computer vision, and quantum research. One such military affiliate is the National University of Defense Technology (NUDT), China's top military institution, operating under the Central Military Commission chaired by Xi Jinping. NUDT has an extensive overseas network, dedicating significant resources to Chinese military missions and involvement in Chinese espionage activities abroad.

In 2019, a Chinese spy who defected revealed that NUDT's "intelligence center" had provided him with a fake passport for a mission in Taiwan aimed at interfering with elections. In 2020, a federal arrest warrant was issued for NUDT researcher Yanqing Ye for falsely identifying herself as a "student" and concealing her ongoing military service at NUDT. While at Boston University, Ye was an active PLA lieutenant, carrying out missions with access to US military websites and documents.

China has dedicated significant efforts and resources to improving its military technology, and partnerships with foreign universities are considered instrumental to that progress. Xi does not view these collaborations as bona fide academic projects but as information that can be used and weaponized to further national interests. As Xi stated in 2013, "science has no borders, but scientists have a motherland." Consequently, it can be challenging for researchers to ascertain whether their collaborative research and innovations are being shared with and used by the Chinese military to perpetuate atrocities such as the Uyghur genocide.

#### **Intimidating Foreign Academics**

While the CCP exploits the research of Chinese students abroad through government-funded programs, Chinese diplomats also suppress foreign scholars and their research. One notable case is New Zealand professor Anne-Marie Brady. Brady faced written threats and break-ins at her home and office for her report analyzing China's political influence activities in Western democracies.

Such tactics have escalated in aggression, leading to scholars facing visa denials, frozen assets, and even sanctions for their academic endeavors. For example, European scholars Jo Smith Finley, Björn Jerdén, and Adrian Zenz were sanctioned for their scholarly activities and for engaging in public discourse on China and their human rights violations in the Uyghur Region.

Chinese embassies and consulates are also involved in hostile behavior to muzzle academics. Political historian and director of the SOAS China Institute in London, Professor Steve Tsang, faced pressure from university administrators to refrain from criticizing Xi or CCP policies publicly. The Chinese embassy in London even summoned Tsang to cancel invitations to Taiwanese politicians to speak at the school. Pressure from Beijing allegedly resulted in the closure of the

School of Chinese Studies at Nottingham University in 2016.

Similarly, in 2021, the Chinese embassy in Washington, D.C., pressured officials of the US National Academy of Sciences twice to disinvite the Dalai Lama and Taiwanese Nobel Prize recipient Lee Yuan-Tseh during the Nobel Prize Summit, which, when ignored, resulted in two apparent cyberattacks. The Chinese government has attempted to censor Lee on multiple occasions, including the embassy in Brazil's attempt to prevent his attendance at the Rio+20 meeting in 2011.

#### **Informal Informant Networks on Campus**

In China, university students are encouraged to monitor and report their professors and fellow students if they engage in academic activities that contradict the official discourse of the CCP. University professors face the risk of suspension or other disciplinary actions for teaching subjects deemed sensitive, particularly those prohibited in Doc. 9 — a widely circulated secret document that prohibits universities from teaching topics such as constitutionalism, the separation of powers, and Western notions of human rights. Students have been reportedly punished for participating in anti-COVID “white-paper” demonstrations or distributing rainbow flags on campus, often after being reported by their peers.

Practices of peer-to-peer surveillance extend beyond China's border to campuses abroad, where the CCP leverages its overseas informal networks of Chinese students and student unions, such as Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSA), to spy on academic activities on foreign campuses.

CSSAs, under the control of the United Front Work Department, is the official organization for overseas Chinese students and scholars. The CSSA network comprises party loyalists dedicated to fulfilling Xi's call of “studying abroad to serve the country.” Members are encouraged to monitor and report on individuals and events critical of China's domestic policies. Despite presenting as non-political student-led organizations, CSSAs have a history of reporting and harassing individuals and activities on campus. At UChicago, the local CSSA requested to cancel Nathan Law's speech, the UC San Diego CSSA prevented the Dalai Lama from giving a commencement address, and the president the CSSA's Egypt chapter reportedly interrogated Uyghur students about their Islamic practices on behalf of Chinese and Egyptian authorities. CSSA members even facilitated a crackdown of over 200 Uyghur students, who were subsequently deported and arrested.

CSSAs are also committed to promoting the Chinese narrative within their respective universities, publicly censoring discourse on sensitive topics such as Hong Kong, Tibet, Taiwan, and the Uyghur Region. In 2021,

representatives of the Bristol CSSA requested the removal of the Flag of East Turkestan from a cultural event poster titled “Oppressive Regime Series – Focus on Xinjiang,” falsely claiming it represented a terrorist group. After the organizer complied with the removal, CSSA representatives pushed for the deletion of the word “oppressive” from the event title, citing a lack of factual evidence to support characterizing the Chinese regime as such.

Additionally, CSSAs receive direct instructions from Chinese Embassies and diplomats. The former chairwoman of the Durham CSSA in the UK claimed that the Chinese Embassy required her to “intervene” in a university lecture titled “China's Threat to the West.” The president of the Durham Union, who hosted a similar debate, also confirmed receiving numerous messages opposing the event, followed by a threatening call from the Chinese embassy warning of potential trade repercussions for the UK if the debate proceeded.

Chinese embassies and consulates also exert pressure and control over individual students, requiring them to monitor and report campus activities — an extension of China's domestic peer-to-peer reporting culture. Certain Chinese students, already primed with nationalist sentiment from their domestic education, naturally follow the embassy's guidance of their own volition. However, those who refuse to cooperate face consequences; they become targets alongside other students whose views contradict the official Chinese narrative. If identified by their classmates, photographed, or reported to Chinese law enforcement, they and their families in China may even face harassment and threats, including physical violence and cyberbullying.

In 2019, a student photographed a Chinese student in Edinburgh holding a sign supporting free elections in Hong Kong and condemning police violence. Upon his return to Chengdu, China, the photos were posted on Chinese social media with the caption “Brothers from Chengdu, beat him to death,” which garnered 10,000 shares. Another student at the University of Minnesota was sentenced to jail for posting cartoon images of Lawrence Limburger and Winnie the Pooh, a character used to mock Xi. He was accused of denigrating the national leader's image and creating a negative social impact.

University professors also fall prey to this reporting scheme, facing pressure from Chinese students regarding anything that deviates from CCP orthodoxy. Professors have been coerced into apologizing for referring to Taiwan as an independent country or displaying maps of the China-India border that may trigger Chinese students in the class. In extreme cases, certain modules have been removed from university programs, as when University College London

professor Michelle Shipworth was banned from teaching a course due to complaints from Chinese students about her lecture mentioning China's modern slavery index.

#### **Ensnaring Institutions: Global Universities**

The growing reliance on Chinese students' tuition fees and funding from the Chinese government is raising concerns about Western universities' acquiescence to telling China's story on the Chinese dictatorship's terms.

In leading British universities, approximately 25% of tuition fee income comes from Chinese students, not accounting for additional state and military-sponsored funding. For example, Jesus College of Cambridge University receives large amounts of funding from both the Chinese government and the Beijing-affiliate and UK-banned Chinese telecom company Huawei.

Within Cambridge University, the Chong Hua professorship in development studies is funded and controlled by Wen Ruchun, the daughter of former Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao. Peter Nolan, a professor from Jesus College and current Chong Hua Chair, also has deep ties to the CCP and a record of discouraging student discussions on controversial topics such as Uyghur human rights and the Hong Kong democracy movement. Nolan also leads Jesus College's China Forum, which has drawn scrutiny due to its charity link with the Cambridge China Development Trust, where Nolan is a trustee. This trust organizes annual China Executive Leadership Programs, sponsored by CCP's Central Committee, with previous participants including executive members of the Party Committee and officials from the UFDW.

China increasingly infringes upon global academic discourse. In 2021, Fudan University signed a memorandum of understanding with the Hungarian government to establish an international campus in Budapest. This was met with widespread opposition due to concerns about increased Chinese influence in Europe. The university, previously one of China's most liberal institutions, also saw its academic freedom hampered when the CCP removed the phrase "freedom of thought" and included a pledge to follow CCP leadership in its university charter.

Satellite campuses of Western universities in China, such as NYU Shanghai, are even more vulnerable to CCP censorship and influence. NYU terminated its fellowship with pro-democracy activist Chen Guangcheng in anticipation of the inauguration of its Shanghai campus and adopted self-censorship by adding "patriotic education" courses to its curriculum to adhere to Chinese academic norms.

#### **Resorting to Self-Censorship**

This chilling effect results in international students and Chinese students who support pro-democracy efforts

alike becoming targets of retaliation. Often the first to succumb to self-censorship, many Chinese students carefully curate their academic activities, from course selection to research topics, to avoid scrutiny. Many instances of self-censorship and harassment go undocumented, which in turn contributes to universities' failure to address issues associated with diminishing academic freedoms on campuses.

Additionally, many China experts grapple with navigating academic freedom and CCP pressures, as many of their research subjects can easily be perceived as too sensitive. Many tread cautiously, refraining from overly critical discourse to maintain access and funding while also resisting the complete adoption of the official Chinese dictatorship narrative to preserve academic integrity.

Some universities have become increasingly vigilant, scrutinizing lectures and even terminology deemed politically sensitive. One notable example is a North American university's Asian Studies department, which revised its guidelines to categorize topics like "Tibetan independence" and "Hinduism from a critical perspective" as sensitive terms.

The delicate balancing act adopted by scholars and institutions underscores the far-reaching influence of the Chinese regime's assertiveness and the urgent need for a robust defense of academic freedom globally.

#### **Conclusion**

As signs of pushback, the US has reduced the number of Confucius Institutes (CIs), and the UK banned over 1,000 Chinese researchers who were a risk to national security from working in the UK, signaling a recognition of the CCP's transnational repression of global academia. However, Beijing's influence persists. The intricate web is stitched together by the enticement of Chinese money, Beijing's intimidation and fear tactics, and the reluctance of many Western institutions to acknowledge the severity of the situation. The lack of reporting and protection mechanisms may leave international Chinese students and faculty vulnerable to CCP coercion and co-optation, forcing them to self-censor to avoid potential trouble. It is crucial not to indiscriminately ostracize all students and researchers associated with China. Universities should instead adopt individualized approaches when assessing if the student is a victim of or complicit in Beijing's transnational repression. A comprehensive investigation is also necessary to identify the risks associated with collaborative research involving Chinese researchers and to ground cooperation in transparency and integrity. Universities must also prioritize ethical due diligence while minimizing financial reliance on Chinese funding, thereby safeguarding academic autonomy and integrity.

1 In 2018, due to heightened scrutiny and investigations into TTP with regards to intellectual property theft, the relevant units are required to refrain from publicly mentioning the term TTP (千人计划), and by 2020, the term was completely blocked from Chinese online discourse. However, it was quietly reintroduced in 2023 under the new name of “Enlightenment Plan” (启明计划).

### **We must be free or die**

19 April 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Phuntsog Wangyal\* argues that loyalty to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the desire for freedom are not incompatible, that clamouring for Tibet’s independence is not only a matter of political freedom in consonance with our democratic system but also a realistic aspiration, while our experience of the 17-Point Agreement shows that trusting China to respect the terms of any middle way policy deal, even if possible, may be a wishful thinking.

Freedom, democracy and independence are huge issues for which many people have fought and died. Democracy means that a choice of leadership is given to the people (as in the USA and UK) where people argue, debate and formulate policies and then vote to decide which policies have the greatest public support – unlike in North Korea or China where there is only one leader and one party.

In the system of democracy which His Holiness has introduced for the Tibetan people there should be a choice between candidates with different policies. To glorify one person and one set of policies is a contradiction of what His Holiness proposed. To suggest that raising the question of independence for Tibet is a greater threat than that imposed by the Communist Party of China is absurd.

In my opinion His Holiness would view current discussion about independence as a sign of growing maturity in political consciousness rather than as something negative which must be objected to. At the time of His Holiness’s announcing the Strasbourg Statement in the European Parliament I was one of a number of people who disagreed with the statement. At the time I was a volunteer working at the Tibet Office in Zurich and I had the honour of personally speaking with His Holiness and expressing my reservations. His Holiness was kind enough to listen and did not object to my arguments or see them as a sign of disloyalty. Moreover, he suggested that I was free to continue to express my views on the importance of struggling for independence. Later I issued a written statement and Jonathan Mirsky – a renowned journalist on China affairs – interviewed me

and published the interview in The Observer newspaper.

Similarly, far from scorning Jamyang Norbu for his pro-independence views, His Holiness graciously met him and stated that it was vitally important “that we unearth historical evidence of Tibet’s independence and make it known, not only to the world but also to the Chinese”. His Holiness added that “without proof of independence, Umaylam (the Middle Way) policy would be like a beggar begging for food”.

Extreme statements like saying “those Tibetans struggling for independence are more dangerous than the Communist Chinese” are absurd and are nothing more than a cowardly attempt to undermine those who have the courage to fight for freedom, democracy and independence. It is unfortunate that such claims seem to come from people close to His Holiness who seem to view every effort for freedom as hostile to His Holiness. This is a shameful distortion and manipulation of the truth. While His Holiness has a personal view of what is spiritually desirable, he has never suggested that the Tibetan people should slavishly follow his every thought. His Holiness withdrew from active politics in 2011, hoping that his people would take more responsibility for political decisions – as happens in other countries. Throughout the democracies of the world a distinction is made between the spiritual life and the political life. Spiritual life deals with life as we ideally wish it to be; political life deals with harsh realities and includes argument, compromise and bargaining.

The Tibetan people’s urge to return to a Tibet that is free and independent has remained unchanged, despite decades of attempts to eradicate or assimilate their way of life into that of a communist and irreligious state. This has been demonstrated over the years by actions such as raising the fist and the Tibetan national flag in defiance, shouting slogans like “Free Tibet” and “China Out” and opposing the CCP by resisting their rule and facing dangers of torture, imprisonment and even sacrificing their lives – as in the cases of self-immolations and many others.

I have personal experience of visiting Tibet many times, from Dartsedo in the east to Ngari in the west, and over a period of more than 28 years. I have witnessed again and again with admiration the Tibetan people’s loyalty to His Holiness AND their determination to be free from living under Chinese communist control. Loyalty to His Holiness and the desire for freedom are not incompatible. Tibetans everywhere are loyal to His Holiness as their religious leader but they also want political freedom. Despite theoretical claims by the communist powers that we are all equal, we all know that the Chinese have always treated Tibetans as second-class citizens. Our way of life, our religion and family values and traditions have

been turned upside down, and false accusations, arbitrary detention, torture and the execution of completely innocent Tibetans continue to this day. Tibetans in Tibet do not trust the communist party to be fair and impartial or to treat us as equals and for those of us lucky enough to live in the free world to go on believing that if we give up our struggle, the CCP will somehow miraculously change and grant us the freedom to live our own lives is pie in the sky. It is not going to happen.

The free world has over decades witnessed the Tibetan people's courage and is sympathetic to Tibet's right to determine its own future. His Holiness also has time and again expressed his admiration for the Tibetan people's courage and determination "not to give up". We must not play into the hands of the CCP and fall into the jaws of the Chinese dragon. Deception and creating confusion are China's most effective tools for destroying its enemies – they were used to win over the Nationalists in the past and are currently being used to win over the Taiwanese.

This is not the time to talk about different views held by different sections of our community and to score points in insignificant arguments. Our division helps only the CCP. The REAL issue is that the people of Tibet are clearly deeply unhappy and are suffering under the rule of the CCP which disregards their wishes to preserve their language and culture, to preserve their religious heritage and natural environment and resources, and to protect their children from communist propaganda which has the intention ultimately to erase our distinctive culture. It is our duty – and especially the duty of those Tibetans who live in the free world – to preserve our culture for the benefit of the whole world.

Submitting to the aggressor has led us in the past to submit to signing the 17-point Agreement in exchange for the promise not to change the Dalai Lama's status. It led us to agree not to raise the question of "independence" in the hope of being able to break the deadlock in negotiations over our status. In both cases the CCP reneged on its promises and left us looking weaker and incompetent. Our confusion benefits only the CCP.

The Tibetan government and the people must find a common long-term goal in seeking complete independence. We must find a strategy to unify the Tibetan community in order to sustain our Tibetan culture and way of life. The struggle for independence is challenging and may be long, but there is nothing that cannot be achieved if we are prepared to endure hardship and move forward together. There are some who say that China with its population advantage of more than a billion is too powerful to challenge but size is not everything as Vietnam, East Timor and Bhutan illustrate. There is a saying that "Little folks

have felled great oaks" – meaning that small numbers of people – IF UNITED AND DETERMINED – can cause great trees to fall.

It is time also for us to remember the law of impermanence. Nothing remains the same forever. The great British Empire on which the sun never set has ended; the seemingly all-powerful Soviet Union disintegrated after 70 years; and more recently feared dictators like Saddam Hussain and Colonel Gaddafi were overthrown. We are witnessing gradual changes in China. The economy of the CCP is failing; countries once befriended by China now see China as an enemy to be wary of; and the Chinese people no longer have trust in their own government. The writing is on the wall that the CCP leaders are losing the confidence of their own people as the crack in the communist system grows wider.

Light will shine after the passing of the darkness of night and truth will ultimately prevail over the forces of evil. Blessed are those who fight for the freedom of their homeland; blessed are those who unite with their fellowmen in resisting aggression. Now is not the time to squabble but to unite.

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\* Phuntsog Wangyal is a former representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and a former member of Tibetan Parliament in Exile

### **Reform and opening up are not dead', but today's China 'looks risky': veteran observer David Lampton**

22 April 2024, [SCMP](#)

- China watcher since the times of Deng Xiaoping says current tightness of political system is likely to continue for the foreseeable future
- 'No government in its right mind' would want China's collapse, but what it and the US want from each other unlikely to happen 'any time soon', he warns

For the Open Questions series of interviews with global opinion leaders, Sylvie Zhuang speaks to David Lampton, former president of US non-profit organisation the National Committee on US-China Relations. Lampton is a professor emeritus at Johns Hopkins-SAIS and author of many books and articles on China. His most recent book is *Living US-China Relations: From Cold War to Cold War*. Lampton first visited China in 1976 as part of a National Academy of Sciences Group on steroid chemistry and three years later returned with then health, education, and welfare secretary Joseph Califano, when Califano



signed the US-China bilateral agreements on health and education.

Read the previous instalment in the series, with James Heimowitz, here.

Professor, you have been watching China since it entered the Deng Xiaoping era of “reform and opening up”, which remains a core and relevant slogan for the Communist Party today. So is the reform drive today different from the one we knew in the Deng era?

It strikes me that while the name “reform and opening up” has continued, the actual content of reform and opening up is [now] rather different. The scope of the reforms themselves is much narrower and the internal decision-making system more tightly controlled, less collective, and more top down.

The earlier reform was more spontaneous combustion. The world was optimistic and very supportive of China. In the earlier reform stage, when China was small and making big strides, the outside world was patient. China was playing a modest economic and security role globally. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) was making big strides, trying to overcome the dysfunction of the Cultural Revolution era.

But now, China is big and the reform-oriented changes are relatively smaller, and the West is much more impatient because what China does greatly affects the outside world. Most dramatically, China’s foreign policy has greater affinity for nations much of the West finds problematic – Russia, Iran and North Korea.

Many have said the so-called reform is dead despite Beijing’s pledge to stick to reform and opening up. What are your thoughts on this? Could you share a bit about your friendship with the Deng family? Do you see the legacy of Deng’s reform and opening up continuing in China in the years to come?

Reform and opening up are not dead, because reform and opening are the nature of this world of security, economic, ecological, and social interconnectivity, and because each generation must find its own way to address the challenges. I think it is appropriate for China to move reforms forward step by step, but my sense is that the current tightness of the political system is likely to continue for the indefinite future.

Deng Xiaoping reflected his personal experience in the Cultural Revolution and earlier experience in Europe, and all this was reflected in the manner in which he promoted his policies. Then, president Jiang Zemin came along and not only reflected his experience in the Soviet Union but also his exposure to Western-style thinking in his youth when he grew up in China’s southeastern city of Yangzhou, one of the most open and economically advanced cities of his era.

President Xi Jinping had his own experience in the Cultural Revolution and that has shaped domestic policy and the current era. Each of those eras has

reflected the experience of the top leader and certainly those around him.

Though I never personally met Deng, I had a feel for him conveyed to me by his family members whom I did know. He brought his experiences in the West as a young man to the needs of China in his time. I think his thinking is very relevant to today.

Then is China a peaking power as some say?

To talk about peaking power means China has reached the top of its power curve and now it’s plateauing or heading downhill, the implication being that the US and like-minded countries and societies will gain in power, relatively. I think that’s a precarious idea. I’m pretty sure it’s not even true, but it certainly is a dangerous assumption if it leads to incautious behaviour by either side.

If you were an ambitious business executive, would there be a difference between thinking about investing in China during the Deng-era reforms and now?

Well, to put it simply, businessmen are now risk-averse and China looks risky to them, and this is true to some extent of Chinese businesspeople as well.

This is partly because their investments need to be bigger now than before and therefore they are more cautious. But, businesspeople also feel less certain about China’s political direction and the health of its foreign relations.

Also, countries around China have improved their societies and economies, like Vietnam, India and Malaysia. Some of them have lower labour costs and look more stable, presenting more attractive investment options for new, marginal investment.

Also, US-China relations are going downhill, so US investment in ChWhen a US administration has poor economic performance, people begin to lose confidence in that administration. In that sense, China’s Communist Party, as the ruling party, will see its popularity and sense of legitimacy necessarily affected by poor economic performance.

There was a period under presidents Jiang Zemin and then Hu Jintao where the party was not very intrusive with respect to foreign business. But now, the party exerts more control and is more present in foreign enterprises. So what is seen by foreigners is the increasing presence and interference of the party in economic decision-making.

Many in the party are not businesspeople. They are concerned about other things like political stability and foreign subversion, while foreign businesses worry about the party just getting too involved in business decisions. Some business executives feel personal insecurity in contemplating travel to China.

President Xi began an unprecedented third term last year. Consequently, an unavoidable question is what is Beijing’s succession plan, if any. What kind of signals

should we watch for in order to understand whether Beijing is preparing the way for the next No 1? And what risks might arise if the rules around succession continue to be kept under wraps?

Any individual political leader, like Xi Jinping, may or may not have a succession plan in their own mind – I don't know what he and those surrounding him may have in mind.

But, for a system to be stable, the population and the broader elite need to know and buy into the succession procedure, and different political groups need to know what the process for succession is. If it isn't a plan based in a law and in the constitution, when the great leader leaves, the default process is political struggle.

China is viewed as riskier, and business wants to diversify its sources of supply. On balance, I would say business is less optimistic and sees significant opportunities for new investment elsewhere.

What role does China's economic growth play in justifying the legitimacy of the ruling Communist Party? Some argue that the current shape of the Chinese economy is a result of the party's lack of capacity and some say it is a lack of willingness to prioritise the economy. Will this undermine the party's power?

Economic performance affects the legitimacy of all governments, not just the Chinese Communist Party. People, abroad or at home, cannot have confidence in the outcome of a power struggle. You may just look at China's history and look at the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, and it seems to me that you either have law and constitutionalism and transparent mechanisms or you have power struggle.

So if you have to ask whether there is a succession plan, there is no succession plan.

Just saying the Politburo Standing Committee will decide, is not really a succession plan. And the third plenum has not happened yet. Where did the third plenum go? If you don't know where the third plenum went, you surely don't know how things are operating. The world pays attention to the internal stability and predictability of major powers. So as China becomes more important to the world, the world cares more about what happens in the PRC. Big powers have a special obligation to manage their politics in ways the rest of the world finds stabilising and to guarantee orderly succession.

Ironically, the United States now presents its own challenges in this respect, for the first time in more than 160 years.

In the past 10 years, China is considered to have become tougher towards the US-led West and tougher on national security and economic self-reliance. Would you say the trend represents the will of the entire party elite or is dictated by a small circle of the

top leadership? Is there still an influential reformist camp within the Communist Party as some say?

Addressing this question is necessarily speculative. I've had some Chinese tell me that China's leaders are divided into two blocks – two irreconcilable blocks.

One set of opinions tends to want China to boldly move forward in reform – and not just reform of economics, but also to loosen party control and improve relations along China's periphery and with the West more broadly. Another big group says that given the hostility of the US, instability in the world, and the economic problems facing China, control needs to be enhanced and national security needs to be the overriding priority. There's the basic question in Chinese politics: which set of policies promotes stability? I think there's a division.

Some people think more reform will enhance security. Others think more reform and loosening increases dangers and instability. I think that's the fundamental question the system is debating.

It appears that the group around Xi Jinping is quite solid in supporting the current policy. However, we know that in recent major international meetings Premier Li Qiang doesn't seem to be so visible to outsiders.

We observe elite appearances because there's so little transparency; we pay great attention to who we see, how often we see them, and what they say. We also pay attention when ministers of defence or ministers of foreign affairs just vanish with no explanation. We ask, "Why is that?"

On US-China ties, many say relations have sunk to the lowest point in recent years and you have labelled the current era as the "second Cold War". In your view, what structural conflicts between the two systems account for this cold war and make it seem inevitable? I do not use the word "inevitable", because I believe in human agency as it relates to policy and politics. But I do believe that the US and China, and their allies and partners, have entered a period reasonably characterised as a cold war – that is not to say [I can forecast] how "cold" it becomes, how long it will last, or what its outcomes may be. There is lots of uncertainty.

In the first Cold War, we had no trade, no students going back and forth, and no tourists, among many other things. So there currently is much more connection in this cold war. But that is misleading if that is all you look at.

The current period is like the first Cold War in several important respects: ideology is becoming important again; the US talks about the struggle between autocracy and democracy as we used to during the first Cold War.

Once you use an ideological vocabulary, you are then in effect saying that you want China to change its

system. Well, no country will change its system because somebody else wants them to. The dichotomy between autocracy and democracy is not a good basis for productive US-China relations.

Once again, alliance behaviours have become important. Washington is building new partnership organisations and China is doing this with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Brics, and the “no limits” partnership with Russia. And most obvious of all are the rapidly growing military spending and arms, cyber, and space races.

So what would be the possible scenarios, or what would a victory look like for the US side? Would the US aim for a Soviet-style collapse of China? What would a victory look like from the Chinese perspective?

I think no government in its right mind would hope for China’s collapse, because that would be a tragedy for the Chinese people and a tragedy for Asia and the whole world. China is a major engine of the global economy and a major determinant of the globe’s ecological future. Just look at the last pandemic, the Covid-19 pandemic. China produced medical devices that the rest of the world couldn’t produce enough of. If China were to collapse, where would all the refugees go?

To predict or seek “collapse” in either of our societies is to contemplate unimaginable costs for ourselves and the world beyond. In this sense “victory” is an illusion.

I think for most people, they would like to see China evolve in a more reform-oriented way and at a faster pace, and also with less closeness to Russia when Moscow is invading its neighbours.

Further, I think China’s neighbours wish for it to become more respectful of their maritime and other boundaries, or at least shelve disputes and curtail claim advancement. I think China wants Washington to act in conformity with its long-standing one-China policy, not drift towards a “one China, one Taiwan” policy. That’s probably the single most important thing. China also would like to see the US and countries along China’s periphery not so closely cooperating militarily.

But the point is, all of these things don’t look very likely to happen any time soon. Xi has seen Putin more than any other major power leader, and the leaders of Japan, Philippines, and the United States just convened in Washington.

Could you share with us the state of China studies in the US now, and how the field has changed in the past few years? You have mentioned before that younger China watchers are being driven to employ different methodologies to understand the country. Are they relying less on first-hand interviews and field research now? I also learned from a previous interview of yours that you love to study China from the “inside out” – by

talking to ordinary people, as well as leaders at various levels. Is that the case for the younger generation of China watchers as well?

I think many of today’s younger China scholars would like to study China more from the inside out, but, frankly, that is becoming less possible. Consequently, China scholars must diversify their methods. Beginning in the late 1970s and the early 80s, China became increasingly open to foreign scholars coming and studying, not only in libraries, but also getting out in the field and talking to people that are not all central government people.

I think we learned a lot and this openness gave China more influence and made people more empathetic to China. We could understand some of the problems China had, and still has.

With the decline of strategic trust and all the talk about spies in both of our countries, it’s become more difficult for foreign scholars, particularly Americans, to do field research in China. Archives like the foreign ministry archive are now not open to foreign scholars, but used to be.

When I was younger, I met most of China’s presidents, chairmen, general secretaries, and premiers. Basically, we had great access. Now, young China scholars want to have that degree of access but they don’t have it. And, I should also say, the US government is similarly restricting Chinese access to our officials for Chinese researchers. So, younger American scholars are relying more on documents, data sets, cyber and remote sensing tools, interviews in third locations, and they increasingly go to Taiwan for language study and research.

The more people experience China from the inside, the better our understanding will be. In the 1950s through the 60s and into the early 70s, most China scholars had to go to Taiwan or Hong Kong because those were the only places where they could even talk to Chinese refugees.

Well, you don’t get a very good picture of a country by talking only to people who left; you also want to talk to people who stayed in [mainland] China. So, China’s current policy is making it harder for outsiders to have an objective view of China.

China has been rivalling the US on different fronts, like tech, science, trade and arms development. How would you assess China’s influence in terms of its hard power and soft power? What are its main strengths and weaknesses?

A country’s hard power is very difficult to judge. Is it measured by how many nuclear bombs it possesses? If we have 1,400 nuclear warheads and China has 500, are we more than twice as powerful as China? If China has more troops than the US, is China more powerful than America?

For example, the US has lots of military power in the vicinity of Taiwan, but the US must project its power over vast distances, far from home. It has basing agreements with neighbours closer to China, but what kind of access may Washington have if conflict arises? So, even in the Taiwan Strait, it's not all totally clear who's stronger and who is weaker. Such uncertainties are the soil in which the odds of miscalculation grow. On soft power – both sides are reducing direct access to each other's scholars – and media – as mentioned above, with the curtailment being much more severe on the Chinese side than with respect to efforts by Washington.

There still are around 300,000 Chinese students and scholars in the US while there are about 400 Americans studying and researching in China. Chinese language training is, to some extent, moving to Taiwan, though there still are important joint Sino-American programmes and institutions operating in China.

The US media doesn't have many people in China any more. Some are now reporting on [mainland] China from Taiwan.

I have always felt that a China that opens itself gains in power and influence. I hope both our countries will renew the science and technology umbrella agreement that Deng Xiaoping and president Jimmy Carter signed in 1979.

The US is in its election year, with some anticipating a Trump return. If Donald Trump actually makes it back to the White House, what impact do you think that will have on US-China relations, and what changes would he bring to Washington's China policy?

I believe that it is not possible to, at this moment, predict the outcome of the US general election in November 2024. I do believe that each side in the American contest for the presidency will react and speak with less moderation this year than in non-election years. It, therefore, is important that each side be especially watchful and prudent.

And then there is the fact that Trump, as a personality, brings a degree of unpredictability to decisions unseen in our history. Anybody who hopes for a Trump return must be ready to contemplate very dangerous instability in bilateral relations, not to mention broader American foreign policy.

There's a think tank in Washington called the Heritage Foundation that appears to be empowered by Trump to develop policies for the new administration if he wins. The Foundation has put out a long study (set of recommendations) for Trump to implement in a hypothetical Trump administration.

You don't need to speculate if he is planning to escalate the trade war with China – he's talked about raising tariffs across the board by a very high percentage if he is elected.

Also, I think trade conflict and less free trade will happen regardless of who gets elected here – the US is spending tens of billions of dollars to rapidly expand the capability of our silicon chip production to compete with China and its industrial policy subsidies. Likewise, China is deepening its industrial policy and the US is greatly accelerating its own industrial policies. This will continue whether you have Trump or [Joe] Biden.

Having said all this, to those who value a more pacific and constructive future, there are no certainties, but the prospects for improvement would be far greater under a second Biden administration. But, even that road will be bumpy, requiring the wisest and most diligent efforts of both nations.

Some US-China trade and military talks have been revived. Xi and Biden spoke on the phone earlier this month. To what extent do you think this can help to diminish the distrust between the two countries? What are their limitations? What could China and the US do to reduce distrust and, realistically speaking, which would be the easiest step to begin with?

I think it's almost always better to talk than not to talk, so I applaud our two presidents speaking to each other. While talk is good, it also is essential to address the sources of distrust. Enhancing confidence also requires concrete and constructive actions by both sides in important areas.

It's my sense that neither side is willing to address the most important concerns of the other. For instance, will the US be restrained in weapons transfers and foreign military sales and financing to Taipei? Will Washington suddenly start sending high-capacity chips to China? Is Beijing likely to say bye-bye to the "no limits" partnership with Russia, putting military pressure on Taiwan, and purchasing Iranian oil? I don't think so.

Operative guidance for the relationship for the next year should above all be the doctor's code – "First, do no harm".

Beyond that, I would like to see some modest steps such as opening our closed consulates in Houston and Chengdu, restarting the Fulbright Program, and signing a revived Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement for a full five-year term, not just another six-month extension. Forging more strategically ambitious cooperation, such as working to address the Gaza humanitarian fiasco in the United Nations, would be very helpful.

### **More and More Chinese Citizens Lose Trust in CCP Leadership**

16 April 2024, [Catalyst](#)

A few years ago, in 2021, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) celebrated the centennial of its founding. It is

the legacy of one of the most daunting world powers. While bursts of fireworks marked this celebration, a shadow of fear lingers over the people of China.

Today, China is ruled by an authoritarian government, and more and more citizens are losing faith in their leaders. The Party seeks to silence any dissidents, and it censors any information considered harmful to its endeavors. Despite this milieu, the people of China seem to be increasingly pro-democracy and anti-party despite the hazards of such convictions.

The CCP seeks to establish cultural and ideological control over the world's largest population. Anything resembling distrust or protest of the Party is quickly stamped out. Under the guise of COVID-19 safety precautions, the government banned public demonstrations in Hong Kong to commemorate the Tiananmen Square Massacre, according to historian Andy B. Liu. The Tiananmen incident, one of the most controversial events in modern Chinese history, was formerly openly commemorated in the city.

In spring 1989, demonstrators flooded Beijing's Tiananmen Square. They demanded democratic norms, calling out the injustices of media censorship, restrictions on freedom of assembly, and the stifling of other liberties. On June 4th, troops opened fire on the civilians. The death toll has always been a point of contention. Several hundred, possibly several *thousand*, lost their lives.

The very things the Tiananmen demonstrators protested were used to cover up the story: censorship and regulation of public assembly. Decades have passed, but the tactics remain unchanged. Citizens' motives to protest remain also.

In 2020, the people of Hong Kong came together for an annual pro-democracy rally, defying government regulations to not hold public gatherings exceeding 50 people. Beijing stepped in and arrested numerous demonstrators.

Taiwan, although de facto independent, shares significant cultural heritage with the mainland as well as current economic ties. Taiwan's trust in the CCP, however, is growing fairly slim. At a rally, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen stated, "We don't want Hong Kong-style peace. We want dignified peace." Such sentiment echoes the region's general reaction to China's 2020 crackdown.

That year, the well-known Chinese real-estate developer Ren Zhiqiang, who criticized the Party and called Xi "a clown who had no clothes," was imprisoned for an 18-year sentence. It's dangerous to speak out against China's leaders, but citizens continue to do so. We just don't see too many of them for too long. Zhiqiang was an outlier in that he was widely heard before his arrest and disappearance from public view. Alluding to Vladimir Putin's public and ultimately lethal imprisonment of political rival, Aleksei A.

Navalny, the New York Times columnist Li Yuan alleges there are thousands of similar cases in China hidden from public knowledge.

In 2022, demonstrators protesting COVID-19 local lockdown policies took to the streets of China's capital and other cities. They held blank sheets of paper, a metaphor for the country's widespread censorship and the near illegality of political protest. The gatherings quickly became focused on broader liberties, calling for the practice of democratic principles. Some protesters eventually called for the removal of President Xi. AP called the movement "the most direct challenge to the Communist Party's authority in decades."

Not only are inconvenient opinions in the public square discouraged, but what citizens communicate and consume via the media gets censored by the state or its affiliates. In China, the press is not just "the fourth estate" in name only. The media—what comes in and what goes out—is heavily filtered by the government.

Practically any media viewed by the Chinese public has been influenced by the Party. The Central Propaganda Department, an organization of the CCP, coordinates with its affiliates, to monitor all publicly available content.

The government forbids talking about the Tiananmen Square Massacre in the media or other forums, especially when it conflicts with the official story. For years, there's been a desire to use the Internet liberally, demonstrated by Chinese citizens having begun to find ways to work around the far-reaching censorship.

Over 500 critical documents divulging the procedures of Chinese state-affiliated tech company i-Soon were leaked to GitHub in March. These show an extensive hacking scheme of monitoring and "harassing dissidents who publicly criticize the Chinese government." Although the source of the leak is supposedly dissatisfied with i-Soon's policies, the unknown whistleblower could be an unhappy employee or someone upset with the way i-Soon's tech gets used.

The London-based Chinese journalist Xinran, who has devoted years to unearthing the hidden history of postwar China, says, "The surveillance of ordinary people is now commonplace. Xi's China has become like 1984."

From an outside perspective, the CCP's hold over Chinese citizens seems to be failing under the strain of its ever-tightening grip.

### **Xi Jinping's meeting with former Taiwanese president: Understanding Cross-strait dynamics**

16 April 2024, [First Post](#)

China's President Xi Jinping met with Taiwan's visiting former President Ma Ying-jeou in Beijing on April 10, 2024. This is their second meeting after they met in Singapore in November 2015, when Ma was the President of Taiwan.

Wang Huning (the top-most politburo standing committee member in charge of the Taiwan issue), Cai Qi, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

From April 1 to 11, Ma was leading 20 young people from the Taiwan region to the Chinese mainland for talks. The meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing was the first time that a Chinese leader has met a former president of Taiwan on Chinese soil. Ma is considered more friendly to China than the current Taiwanese president, Tsai Ing-wen.

This meeting is seen as an effort by China to influence Taiwan's politics. Ma visited Fujian, Xian, and other places. Last year, Ma visited China just before Taiwan went for presidential elections in January of this year but did not meet Xi.

Ma was Taiwan's president from 2008 to 2016. In May 2008, Ma declared "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" and subsequently broadened economic ties and signed accords on direct postal, shipping, and air links. In 2010, chairman of Beijing's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait Chen Yunlin visited Taiwan, making him the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit Taiwan. Chen addressed Taiwan's president as "Mr Ma".

Ma also opened Taiwan for group tours from China. Initially capped at 300 visitors a day, the numbers quickly soared to 1.6 million mainlanders in 2011 (the total by 2011 was 7 million). This tourism led to \$3 billion in Taiwan's economy, an amount equal to 0.72 per cent of the island's gross domestic product. Ma proposed in June 2010 an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China—a sort of free trade area proposal. Ma also expressed his opinion about joining the proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), although China had not viewed this with enthusiasm. ECFA led to massive opposition in Taiwan, mainly led by the youth, who spearheaded the Sun Flower Movement by occupying the Premier and other offices in Taipei. Their main accusation was that the ECFA is detrimental to Taiwan's economy and that no oversight committee has been proposed for evaluating the ECFA.

In September 2010, Ma cobbled up confidence-building measures (CBMs) in the military field with China. In October 2011, Ma proposed a peace agreement with China through a referendum process. All of these pro-China measures by Ma endeared him to the Chinese leadership, even though they backfired with the Taiwanese citizens.

While not addressing the current Chinese intimidating military exercises near Taiwan, Xi stated in his meeting

with Ma's entourage that "external interference cannot hold back the historical trend of national reunification."

Further, Xi said: "All Chinese on both sides of the Strait should firmly oppose any separatist moves of secessionists on the island and interference by external forces, firmly safeguard the common home of the Chinese nation, and work together to pursue a bright future for peaceful reunification. The future of the Chinese nation should be firmly held in the hands of the Chinese people."

Xi stressed in his speech that unification with Taiwan is part of the rejuvenation project. The speech is aimed at countering the United States, Japan, and other countries support for Taiwan as well as criticising the "independent" forces within Taiwan.

The current ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is seen as moving towards independence, even though in the DPP's two terms from 2000 to 2008 and 2016 until now, it has desisted declaring itself independent. The DPP also rejected the '1992 consensus' between Kuomintang (KMT), of which Ma was the Chairman, and China's Communist Party (CCP). According to this, Taiwan and China belong to 'one China'. China has said acceptance of the consensus is a precondition for resuming public dialogue with Taiwan. This is not acceptable to the current ruling DPP in Taiwan.

The DPP says that while the KMT lost its war to the CCP in 1949, it fled to Taiwan and practiced authoritarian leadership until 1986. A decade later, the first elections in Taiwan threw an altogether different generation that stresses Taiwan identity. Indeed, according to a National Chengchi University Election Study Center survey conducted in 2023, only 1.2 per cent of Taiwanese support unification with China.

A Pew Research Centre poll released earlier this year found that 67 per cent identify as primarily Taiwanese, while 28 per cent consider themselves primarily Taiwanese and Chinese, and only 3 per cent consider themselves primarily Chinese.

Identity in Taiwan is tied to politics. Those who consider themselves primarily Taiwanese are most likely to align themselves with the ruling DPP. Ma is thus trying to enhance the segment that supports the unification process.

The visit of Ma at this juncture is interesting. First, Lai Ching-te, the current Vice President and President-elect in January this year, will be taking the oath of office in May, and hence the timing of Ma's visit to China is interesting. Lai's party, the DPP, has lost the majority in the Legislative Yuan by a thin margin, and Ma's KMT party could stall crucial legislation in the future.

Second, Japan's Prime Minister Kishida and Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos are in the United States meeting President Biden. They possibly discussed

China's invasion scenarios of Taiwan, and possibly both will coordinate the security situation in the Taiwan Straits.

By meeting Ma at this juncture, Xi is also conveying a message of influencing cross-Strait dynamics. It is also interesting that the second Ma-Xi meeting comes on the 45th anniversary of the signing of the US Taiwan Relations Act into law, requiring Washington to take steps to help the island defend itself, including through arms sales, despite Beijing's vocal opposition.

Third, an official KMT delegation is due to visit China in June, even though specific dates are not notified. This suggests that the KMT itself is in a huddle, given the Taiwanese predicament on the unification issue.

Fourth, Xi addressing select Taiwanese youth is also intended to carry the CCP propaganda into Taiwan and build a pro-China constituency, even though Ma returned home without any assurances from Xi that intimidating military exercises would be discontinued. Prof. S. Kondapalli, the author is Professor in Chinese Studies at JNU. Views expressed in the above piece are personal and solely that of the author. They do not necessarily reflect Firstpost's views.

### What Would Modi's Third Term Mean for India-China Relations?

15 April 2024, [Geopolitical Monitor](#)

India will hold its 18th general election on April 18, 2024, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are poised to win a third term. Similar to his first and second terms, a significant amount of historical and contemporary political and economic baggage will burden Modi's third term and his relations with China. While his anticipated election victory would likely result in the continuation of complex India-China issues and tensions from his previous years as prime minister, Modi appears to have a stable but delicate relationship with China to manage.

#### **Competing perspectives of Modi**

The vast majority of Chinese internet users have a positive view of India's leader, calling him 'Immortal Modi' or 'Modi Laoxian' ('不朽的莫迪'). Based on data from the popular microblogging platform Weibo (China's version of Twitter), which has more than 598 million active monthly users, many Chinese people also think that Modi is crucial to preserving the balance of power in the world.

Competing perspectives of Western-style liberal democracy and China's political model commonly, though unfairly and inaccurately, portray the former as the stable foundation of a well-functioning society, whereas the latter, marked by ardent nationalism and a supreme leader, is viewed as volatile. Weibo users' comments shed light on their perceptions of

democracy as a fundamentally unstable political system beset by internal conflicts, corruption, and misrepresentation. Indeed, they frequently dismiss the concept of democracy as a whole process. Many Chinese people believe that larger nations, even ones that claim to be democratic, tend to adopt authoritarian characteristics.

Western media often express this erroneous belief when reporting on political developments in India. During Modi's tenure, debates about the essence of Indian democracy have shifted, which is consistent with Chinese perspectives on the democratic system in general but not on India's democratic system specifically. This lively but partisan debate, not confined to academia, centers on the purported new chapter in Indian history, where Modi's leadership has distanced the nation from the fundamental principles of democracy, minority rights, and executive accountability.

Nitasha Kaul, a well-known Modi critic, writes for the Australian Institute of International Affairs that 'the Modi myth proffers the idea of a paternal, ascetic, and efficient leader at the helm of a civilizational resurgence of India as a "Vishwa Guru" (world leader).' In 2021, Jostein Jakobsen and Kenneth Bo Nielsen of The Centre for Development and the Environment at the University of Oslo added India under Modi to their list of 'authoritarian, populist, and right-wing regimes.' In 2023, *The Guardian* published an article calling Modi's government 'autocratic' and 'illiberal.' Similarly, a *Financial Times* piece from the same year highlighted Modi's alleged 'authoritarian streak' as a major concern for the West.

However, China's recent mention of Modi contrasts sharply with the much-embellished portrayal of India during his tenure. On 2 January 2024, Zhang Jiadong, the director of the Centre for South Asian Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, expressed his admiration for Modi, his economic and foreign policy, and his 'Bharat narrative'. Zhang claimed that India has become more proactive and self-assured on a national and international level. His remarks were published by the state-run newspaper Global Times. Coming from the Chinese government, these statements might seem unconventional, but when considering India's efforts to create a multi-aligned system in international affairs and the Western disapproval of India following the West's unsuccessful attempts to steer Modi towards Western alignment, they have geopolitical relevance, particularly regarding China's relationship with India under Modi.

Though he and his party greatly benefit India, Modi now poses a challenge to governments, intellectuals, and people of Western and Indian ancestry who support Congress. India has a strong governance

framework, making it difficult for a single person or political party to attain widespread popularity. For the past nearly 23 years, he has served as Prime Minister of India and Gujarat State Chief Minister, owing to his and his party's perseverance and nationalist, India-focused agenda, not because he is a despot or authoritarian. People understand how regional and global environments are degrading and changing, as well as where India should rank as a developed country on the world map. They are electing him and his party to govern India (or Bharat). Furthermore, the Supreme Court, as the pinnacle body in India's robust judicial structure, keeps a watchful eye and is well-equipped to deal with any violations of democratic institutions by any person or entity.

The BJP/Modi government at the helm is now well-positioned to bolster India's economic standing without yielding to any internal or regional pressures. A landslide victory in the upcoming election may allow Modi and his right-wing nationalist government to reshape India into a Hindu nation, with the goal of amending the Constitution to dilute the problematic principles of secularism and socialism while curbing illegal immigration and ethnic separatism, as well as addressing the challenges posed by rising Islamism. In countering Islamism and terrorism in India, the emphasis is on confronting the activities of a subset of extremist Sunni Muslims. This group, while not substantially contributing to the broader Indian society, is increasingly mobilizing for communal interests, becoming susceptible to the influence of a transnational Islamist agenda and global caliphate bogey. Any potential Modi-led government plan will include a comprehensive approach to addressing the dangers posed by these dynamics while also ensuring national security and social harmony. These objectives broadly align with Beijing's policies in the context of Chinese society.

#### **Tensions**

Although most Chinese people have a positive perception of and interest in the Indian prime minister, the relationship between China and India has been tense for many years, creating an environment conducive to the emergence of new and escalating conflicts between the two countries.

Since his initial election in 2014, China has warmly welcomed Modi, and both parties are optimistic about a new era of India-China relations under the BJP. The first encounter between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi took place in Fortaleza, Brazil, ahead of the 6th BRICS Summit that same year. Xi conveyed to Modi that China and India are long-term strategic and collaborative allies rather than adversaries, underscoring their common goal of 'national rejuvenation' and asserting that cooperation is the most efficient way to achieve it. Despite their

outward amicability, India and China continue to have geopolitical conflicts.

The India-China border dispute, which began in May 2020, has been a frequent topic of discussion between Xi and Modi. Furthermore, there have been ongoing clashes and instances of Chinese aggression along the 4,057 km Line of Actual Control (LAC), a notional boundary, particularly in the Ladakh region. China and India have had territorial disputes along their shared border since the countries' modern beginnings. Both nations engaged in a bloody conflict over this issue in 1962, but it was the only one. However, violent incidents have increased in recent years. Modi, in his third term, cannot ignore or avoid the negative consequences of the current situation for India-China relations. India and China's reluctance to withdraw along the LAC reflects their postures and aspirations on their respective home fronts, as well as on the international stage, where they both desire to expand their influence as emerging global powers.

#### **The Tibet question**

Given the intricacies of historical tensions and Chinese provocations, heightened by the Tibet 'issue', handling toxic border relations is bound to be tough. The Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, who will be 88 in July, and, more importantly, the future Dalai Lama, are major issues in both India and China. India's stance on Tibet is mainly spiritual, with Tibet's geographical location leaving ample leeway for potentially significant political consequences. India has the largest number of Tibetan refugees, and the Dalai Lama issue will have an impact on the country. Given India's rebirth of Buddhism, the country's next and future prime ministers will take a more active position in any Buddhist-related matters, particularly those involving China.

India has yet to make significant use of the Tibet card in its political dealings with China; nevertheless, on March 9, 2024, Modi paid an official visit to Arunachal Pradesh, India's Tibet-border state, where he announced, among other efforts, the important Sela Tunnel Project. Beijing claims the state is part of its territory, Southern Tibet (藏南地区), and calls India's claims 'ridiculous.' For China, Tibet represents the 'three evils' of terrorism, separatism (or 'splittism'), and religious extremism. Under Xi, China is aggressively reinforcing its security in Tibet through increasing militarization, surveillance, and other actions. Both countries have dramatically increased Tibet's geopolitical, cultural, and ecological significance, making it crucial to both.

#### **Cooperation and conflicting conditions**

India and China are economically interdependent, and both are important components of a multipolar, multi-aligned world system. The border dispute is still a major worry, especially in light of the fact that both countries have lost soldiers in armed battles.



Nonetheless, the prospect of cooperation holds significance, particularly considering the plethora of opportunities for relationship-building and pursuing shared interests. Climate change is one such common problem, necessitating collaboration to decarbonize energy systems and diversify energy sources, while others include addressing security problems in a rapidly changing global environment. At COP28, India and China failed to endorse a promise to triple renewable energy sources by 2030, despite a pledge to transition away from fossil fuels. This highlights the paradoxical nature of power rivalry in international relations and between the two most populous countries, led by Modi and Xi, respectively.

One of Xi's biggest challenges is the continuing deflationary pressures caused by rising property prices and diminishing construction output. In contrast, if Modi wins, he will inherit a stable rupee and surging Indian markets. India and China have differing inflation rates, but India is in a favorable economic position, and Modi would inherit India's rising economy and foreign investment opportunities. Overall, India's economy is strong and steady. India's and China's economic positions can have an anchoring effect, limiting or increasing their political capacity and leaders' influence. Inflammatory or aggressive acts by Xi or Modi would have economic consequences for both, potentially causing additional political turbulence on their respective domestic fronts and increasing economic troubles in an already volatile global context. Neither leader will want this.

India-China relations are unique in nature. And, while Modi and Xi have shown open political affection and promised to address common concerns, the two countries, each with over a billion people, are geopolitical rivals with the ability to influence global affairs in both positive and negative ways. As has been the case in recent years, India-China relations will continue to be stable yet sensitive despite their historical, contemporary, and probable future challenges.

### **We need a strategy, not retorts, to deal with China**

14 April 2024, [Deccan Herald](#)

A spokesperson of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mao Ning, "noted" Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments on India-China relations and said that "sound and stable China-India relations serve the common interests of both sides." His comments were in response to Modi's comment calling for the two countries to "urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders" because "Stable and peaceful relations between India and China are important for not just our two countries but the entire region and

the world." The Chinese spokesperson's response conveniently sought to downplay the border issue, saying, "the boundary question does not represent the entirety of China-India relations." This while Beijing indulges in the shenanigan of giving Chinese names to nearly 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh in its continuing bid to claim the entire state as part of its part of its territory. China has eyed Arunachal Pradesh ever since Chairman Mao made his infamous assertion that Tibet was the right palm of China, and Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), including Arunachal Pradesh, its five fingers. Killing thousands of Tibetans, Mao's Communist China annexed Tibet, giving credence to his agenda of 'reclaiming the Middle Kingdom.' Xi Jinping, who has broken with China's Deng Xiaoping line of leaders and returned to a Maoist idea of China, wants to 'rejuvenate' the country by regaining territories that it lost due to imperial intervention since 1840.

After taking over Tibet, during a mass meeting in Lhasa in July 1959, Chinese Lt-Gen Zhang Guohua had said: "The Bhutanese, Sikkimese and Ladakhis form a united family in Tibet. They have always been subject to Tibet and to the great motherland of of China. They must once again be united and taught the Communist doctrine." Alarmed, Bhutan closed its border with China and shut off all trade and diplomatic contacts with Beijing (then Peking). It also established formal defence arrangements with India. It was the annexation of Tibet and Xinjiang province that brought China to the borders of India, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Mongolia. Besides being China's largest political unit in area, Xinjiang has linked China back to the ancient Silk Route, becoming a gateway for Xi Jinping's signature project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and given China ownership over Kashgar, the junction of the Southern Xinjiang Railway Project, which is the gateway to Afghanistan, Iran, Central Asia and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) ending at Gwadar in the Indian Ocean. The Doklam stand-off precipitated by the People's Liberation Army at the trijunction of India-Bhutan-China in 2017 was a clear indication of Xi's idea of 'rejuvenation'. Some have suggested that we fight China's bid to name-and-claim our territory by renaming Chinese towns with Indian names. That would be a juvenile reaction, to say the least, and a naïve way of dealing with China's long-term strategy. Delhi should revisit its 'One China' policy on Taiwan as well as step up support for the Free Tibet movement. We must declare Xinjiang a 'disputed territory' and demand that its majority Uighur population be allowed to determine its status free of Beijing's coercion and oppression. The West, meanwhile, should wash off the China gleam in its eyes, which continues to persist despite the

heightening fear of China's aggressive turn, shed its double standards, and wake up to the realities of regional geopolitical dynamics. It is, after all, already reaping what it sowed in building up the Chinese economy. Does it want to burn its fingers anymore? ... The key to dealing with China's revanchism and hegemonic ambitions is to put a brake on its economy. The West's mindless outsourcing of all manufacturing to China for decades allowed the latter to become the world's second-largest economy. Now, the West must put the genie back in the bottle. Irrespective of who wins the US presidential elections in November, Washington will have to further tighten the economic screws on Beijing. Europe, too, will have to do the same and step back from the unsustainable trade relations the countries of the European Union have developed with Beijing. European car-makers, for instance, will have to redraw their strategies and supply chains if they are to protect their industry, especially in the face of China's aggression in the electric vehicle markets. It is in these realities that India and the West must seek opportunities to together meet the China challenge. On the one hand, New Delhi will have to strengthen its own defence industrial capabilities and keep China at bay on its own. On the other, it has to step up the effort to pull western capital, technology and manufacturing to its soil.

### **China had a 'special place' in PM Modi's heart, now it's a thorn in his side**

13 April 2024, [The Economic Times](#)

Narendra Modi once looked up to China. As a business-friendly Indian state leader, he traveled there repeatedly to attract investment and see how his country could learn from its neighbor's economic transformation. China, he said, has a "special place in my heart." Chinese officials cheered on his march to national power as that of "a political star."

But not long after Modi became prime minister in 2014, China made clear that the relationship would not be so easy. Just as he was celebrating his 63rd birthday by hosting China's leader, Xi Jinping -- even sitting on a swing with him at a riverside park -- hundreds of Chinese troops were intruding on India's territory in the Himalayas, igniting a weeklong standoff.

A decade later, ties between the world's two most populous nations are almost completely broken. Continued border incursions flared into a ferocious clash in 2020 that threatened to lead to all-out war. Modi, a strongman who controls every lever of power in India and has expanded its relations with many other countries, appears uncharacteristically powerless in the face of the rupture with China.

As Modi seeks a third term in an election that begins Friday, the tensions weigh heavily on the overarching narrative of his campaign: that he is making India a major global power and, by extension, restoring national pride. Far from the 2,100-mile border, along every avenue where India seeks to expand, China looms as a fierce competitor.

In India's own backyard in South Asia, China has used its vast resources -- the fruits of economic reforms introduced decades before India's -- to challenge Indian preeminence, courting partners through infrastructure deals and gaining access to strategic ports.

More broadly, China and India are vying to lead the developing nations of the so-called global south. When India hosted the Group of 20 summit last year, using it to showcase its support of poorer countries, Xi skipped the event. China has also been a major roadblock in India's campaign to gain a coveted permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

"Today, you encounter an India which perhaps you had never seen before, in many senses," said Nirupama Menon Rao, a former Indian ambassador to China and the United States. "I think the Chinese are increasingly aware of it, and they would still like to pull us down, to create barriers."

India's estrangement with China has provided an opening for Western nations to expand defense and economic ties with New Delhi, a distressing development for Beijing.

India signed a series of deals with the United States last year to strengthen military cooperation. India has also drawn closer to the other two members of the so-called Quad, Australia and Japan, as the group works to counter China's projection of power.

In addition, India sees an opportunity as the United States and Europe look for alternatives to China as a place to make their products. One early success has been sharply increased production of iPhones in India. But even with these openings, China continues to expose Indian insecurities. The Chinese economy is about five times the size of India's, and China remains India's second-biggest trade partner (after the United States), exporting about six times as much to India as it imports. China spends more than three times what India does on its military, giving its forces a significant advantage across land, sea and air.

The Indian military, which has long struggled to modernize, is now forced to be conflict-ready on two fronts, with China to India's east and archrival Pakistan to its west.

Tens of thousands of troops from both India and China remain on a war footing high in the Himalayas four years after the deadly skirmishes broke out in the disputed Eastern Ladakh region, where both countries have been building up their military presence. Nearly

two dozen rounds of negotiations have failed to bring disengagement.

Although the political opposition has tried to paint Modi as weak in the face of Chinese encroachment, the border incursions are unlikely to hurt him much politically, given the lack of news coverage from a largely sympathetic Indian media.

Still, Modi has had to prioritize billions of dollars for border infrastructure and military upgrades as India still struggles to cover the basic needs of its 1.4 billion people. His government is drawing up plans to repopulate hundreds of border villages as a second line of defense against the constant threat of Chinese encroachment.

S. Jaishankar, Modi's external affairs minister, admitted recently that there were "no easy answers" to the dilemma posed by India's aggressive neighbor. "They are changing, we are changing," Jaishankar said. "How do we find an equilibrium?"

In a book published in 2020, just as he had taken over as Modi's trusted foreign policy architect, Jaishankar wrote that the tensions between the United States and China set "the global backdrop" for India's choices in a "world of all against all." India's ambitions as a major power, he wrote, would require a juggling act: "engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia."

India's rise as a large, growing economy has allowed it to hold its ground -- working with any partner it can benefit from -- in a polarized and uncertain world.

Even as India has expanded defense ties with the United States and doubled bilateral trade over the past decade, to about \$130 billion in goods alone, it has resisted American pressure to reconsider its strong relations with Russia. India has deepened connections with Europe and the Middle East, too; trade with the United Arab Emirates alone has reached \$85 billion.

While India remains wary of becoming a pawn in the West's fight with Beijing, and has not forgotten its frosty history with the United States, China has become an unavoidable focus after being a secondary threat for much of modern Indian history.

India's socialist founding prime minister was accommodating of communist China, but the bonhomie was shattered by a monthlong war in 1962 that left thousands dead. The relationship began to normalize in the 1980s even as incursions continued, and open channels of communication kept tensions down and elevated trade.

"It was a different China," said Rao, the former top diplomat.

The situation changed in the years before Modi took office, she said. As its economy soared, China began flexing its muscles -- investing heavily in its Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, which India saw as threatening its security and spheres of influence, and

moving more aggressively on its borders and in the Indian Ocean.

Still, Modi, blacklisted by the United States when he was a state leader over his alleged role in religious riots, continued to extend a hand to Beijing. As prime minister, he did not allow the embarrassment of the Chinese incursion in 2014 to dampen his red-carpet welcome to Xi. His subtle message -- a warning that "a little toothache can paralyze the entire body" -- carried the hope that Xi would come around.

That hope ended with the deadly 2020 clash in Eastern Ladakh. Now, it is clear that New Delhi is resigned to a long-term threat from China, a shift evident in Modi's push for road and tunnel construction in border areas to support a large troop presence.

Over the past five years, more than 2,200 miles of roads have been built along the border. In the Kashmir region, over 2,000 workers have been busy for three years digging a high-altitude tunnel that will improve connectivity to Ladakh.

When the tunnel project, which will cost more than \$850 million, is completed, it will ensure that traffic moves year round, and reduce travel time by hours.

"For four months, the supplies to the Indian army were cut off because the road would get closed," said Harpal Singh, the project head. "After this tunnel is complete, that will not happen again."

Modi's government is also trying to revive hundreds of villages along the border to fortify defenses.

Through a program called Vibrant Villages, the government is working to develop infrastructure, extend services and nurture tourism in the hope of reversing the economic migration that created "ghost villages."

"What India could have done in the last 20 years, they have to do now in two," said ??Sonam Murup, a retired Indian army officer from Ladakh, referring to infrastructure development in his area.

"Our situation is much better now," he said. "But when you look toward the Chinese side, you can see villages full of lights."

This article originally appeared in The New York Times.

### **India-China border dispute: Beyond the hype, the reality of the LAC**

13 April 2024, [Indian Express](#)

Online strap: Talk of land loss in eastern Ladakh is gross exaggeration. Indian forces gave a fitting response to premeditated Chinese aggression in 2020. New government must continue to work on de-escalation. The clamour of considerable land being lost to China in eastern Ladakh is political hyperbole -- an agenda-driven narrative to bolster electoral prospects on national security grounds. The issue was raised in

August last year by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi but no studies or expertise are available to verify such claims.

Ladakh certainly has been and will continue to remain a serious flashpoint. There are no borders here except a 1,597 km-long Line of Actual Control (LAC), a notional demarcation separating India and China since 1962. Even the LAC is not well defined. Both countries have differing perceptions. The patrolling is done till 65 earmarked Patrol Points (PPs) stretching from Karakoram to Chumur. The recent dispute points occurred at PP9, 10, 11, 12, 12A and 13 in Depsang, PP14 in Galwan, PP15 and PP16 in Hot Springs/ Chang Chenmo, and PP17 and 17A in Gogra.

#### Chushul-Pangong Sector

In the Chushul-Pangong sector, the situation in the Sirijap range on the north bank of Pangong, where Finger series 1 to 8 jut out, is stable. In May 2020, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) entered the Finger 3-4 area to prevent Indian troops from patrolling. After the disengagement agreement in February 2021, the status quo prior to May 2020 is being restored.

#### Kailash Range

In the Kailash range, the PLA's provocative move in early September 2020 to capture Nyanlung Yokma/Gongma or the Kailash Heights, at an altitude of 15,000 feet located between Pangong Tso and Spanggur Gap, was foiled by the Indian Army in a major pre-emptive strategic manoeuvring. Peace was restored after both sides agreed to disengage from north and south Pangong Tso in February 2021.

#### Chang Chenmo Valley

PLA's intrusions in Galwan Valley, Changlung Nalla, Hot Springs and Kongrung Nalla of Chang Chenmo Valley, where it had created area denial for Indian troops, are also relatively peaceful now. Both sides agreed to disengage in June 2020.

The situation in the Gogra-Hot Springs area remained volatile until September 8, 2022, when both sides agreed to disengage. There are no forward deployments in this area though a buffer zone is being created with new patrolling norms. All temporary structures have been dismantled. However, the situation in the PP15 area remains tense as China is still adamant about restoring the pre-April 2020 position.

#### Depsang and Demchok

Currently, only Depsang and Demchok remain points of friction, predating the 2020 stand-off. Since 2009, the PLA has frequently made offensive moves from Track Junction Nallah to the south at Burtse/Depsang Plains. In 2011, PLA built a 30 km road from Raki Nallah to cut into the Depsang Plains. In 2013, Burtse became a flashpoint when the PLA set up remote camps 18-19 km inside Indian Territory, preventing Indian patrolling from PP10, PP11, PP12 and PP13. The Shyam Saran

Report of August 2013 made a chilling revelation of India having lost 640 sq km area due to "area denial" by the PLA.

Since 2019, the PLA has blocked the Bottleneck area, restricting India's patrolling limits to PP10 and PP11. The Chinese road construction along Jeevan Nallah towards the south, adjacent to our Murgo post, could potentially cut off the Indian supply line to the DBO at Murgo, like in the case of Galwan. Experts suggest that the Chinese are in control of 600-800 sq km of the southern half of Depsang Plains. The situation here remains complicated and deadlocked. Therefore, complete disengagement has been elusive.

In Demchok, the PLA has been violating LAC at Charding-Nilung Nallah (CNN) junction since 2018, obstructing Indian patrolling to that point. The dispute is stalemated.

As for Ladakhi Changpas losing grazing ground, their movements were restricted along the LAC because of heavy militarisation by the Chinese as well as Indian armies. India has shored up its defences, inducting several reinforcements, including artillery brigades, after the 2013 Depsang episode.

#### Infrastructure upgrades

One cannot overlook the fact that infrastructure in eastern Ladakh has been ramped up in recent years. Earlier, the Chinese bullied and coerced India because of the latter's lax attitude and grabbed a chunk of Ladakh territory between the 1960s and 1990s. The situation has changed now. India had stepped up construction activities under the UPA government but the projects were mired in corruption and scams. The BJP government has fast-tracked the connectivity projects, including the 260 km long Shyok-DBO road that was completed on a war footing. DBO can be reached from Dorbuk in eight hours now, which gives Indian troops a major advantage in the difficult terrain. India's growing dominance in far-flung areas has been one of the key factors that forced the PLA to react differently, accusing India of transgressions on the LAC and provoking the Galwan stand-off in 2020.

Our aviation infrastructure has also been upgraded after reactivating all the abandoned Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) at DBO, Fukche, and Nyoma. The Nyoma ALG is being upgraded into a full-fledged airfield capable of operating cargo as well as fighter jets. This will boost the security of eastern Ladakh apart from the economic development of the Changthang region.

#### Fitting response to Chinese aggression

In all, one cannot deny that the Indian forces gave a fitting response to premeditated Chinese aggression and denied China a strategic victory in 2020. Beijing has been made to realise the cost of engaging in misadventures.

Certainly, the LAC situation remains in a stalemate, although the 21st round of Corps Commander-level meetings was held in February to reduce tension in the region.

The accusation of losing massive areas, therefore, is a gross exaggeration. Technically, there has been no intrusion on our side of the LAC. The discrepancies have occurred only in the grey-zone patrolling areas due to differences in LAC perception. Both sides should grasp fresh opportunities to revive the stalled process of clarifying the LAC after the new government is formed in New Delhi.

### Ian Explains: Xi Jinping's nationalist agenda is rebuilding walls around China

12 April 2024, [Gzeromedia](#)



[Youtube Link](#)

It's been a rough few years for China's economy. Between harsh "Zero Covid" policies that shut China off from the rest of the world and major Communist Party crackdowns on private sector industries, the country is in desperate need of an economic jolt. So President Xi Jinping has been on an international charm offensive outside China, hoping to attract foreign investment. But if you look inside China, Xi's vision is one of extreme nationalist messaging and centralized control that's hurting his message abroad. On Ian Explains, Ian Bremmer breaks down how Xi Jinping is turning China inwards at a time when it can't afford to close itself off. Since assuming the presidency in 2012, Xi has consolidated power within the Communist Party to become China's most dominant ruler since Chairman Mao Zedong. Under Xi's watch, China has rolled back democratic rights in Hong Kong, implemented crackdowns on the powerful tech, finance, and real estate sectors, restricted English in schools, and even expanded the definition of espionage so broadly that basic interactions with foreigners are viewed as suspect.

President Xi's nationalist vision has become so dominant that it's written into the Constitution and official history of the People's Republic. But will that vision make China hostile to the very ideas that fueled its economic transformation in the first place?

### The Hot Peace Between China and India

12 April 2024, [The Diplomat](#)



*Karni Sena supporters shout slogans during a protest against China in Ahmedabad, India, June 24, 2020. Credit: AP Photo/Ajit Solanki*

Despite flashes of actual conflict along their border, and New Delhi's increased outreach to the West, relations between China and India have never completely broken down.

Relations between China and Japan have often been characterized as a "cold peace." As such, they have been stormy enough to create a massive rejection of China in Japan's public opinion, and a solidification of the Japan-U.S. alliance, which entered a new stage with Prime Minister Kishida Fumio's state visit to the United States this week. Yet, economic relations have always been strong, with a degree of dependence of Japanese firms on China, and a Chinese reliance on Japan's market as well.

Not so with India. Flashes of actual conflict have happened, none as protracted as the triple challenge from China over Ladakh, Sikkim, and, indirectly, Arunachal Pradesh, since 2020. Soldiers from both sides have died in combat. China has built a network of bunkers, tunnels and fortified villages. India has mobilized 100,000 soldiers close to the front line and worked on its own logistical infrastructure.

Even a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Arunachal Pradesh, a region that has been India's since the British drew up the McMahon line in 1914, is enough to incur the ire of the Chinese government. Beijing always reminds India that it claims the state as Chinese land, as successive governments in Beijing never accepted the 1914 delimitation.

Therefore, this is at best a hot peace. India's public opinion has gone the way of Japan's, and New Delhi has increasingly turned westward – toward the United States, France, and others such as Israel – to supplement its aging Russian armament connection. Yet, relations between China and India have never completely broken down. Certainly, India has taken steps to limit the China risk in its infrastructure and society – banning China from ports and rail construction, prohibiting Chinese apps, keeping

Chinese telecoms out of Indian procurement, and rebuffing plans for massive BYD and Great Wall Motors automobile investments. This does not apply, however, to the overall trade and investment relationship.

Bilateral trade passed \$136 billion in the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2022, with a huge and rising deficit of \$100 billion for India. In fact, Indian exports crashed while China's sales to India continued their rise. And certainly BYD is happy to sell on the Indian market the cars it cannot build locally. Indian officials claim to be open to Chinese investments, hinting in January 2024 at Davos that the openness may increase as the border becomes quiet.

The potential long-term gains for either China or India are not clear. China seems to take a line from the ancient fable where the fox, unable to reach attractive grapes, proclaimed that "they were too sour anyway." China's India experts and the *Global Times*, the mouthpiece for foreign consumption, proclaim that India is "a graveyard for investment" and hype the known complexity of doing business there.

Some non-Chinese analysts argue that China's belligerent behavior, on three border theaters, has pushed India to further embrace a quasi-alliance with the United States, and a very strong strategic partnership with France that implies less conditionality on weapon procurement. But this is a result that Xi Jinping's China has produced all over Asia. China does not seem to take actual notice of such developments as the Quad, AUKUS, a rising Japanese military budget, or the Indo-Pacific designs of Europeans that leave China aside.

Xi's China believes in the slow erosion of will in democracies, and that factor seems to weigh more than the present power balance. China's new defense budget increase of 7.2 percent is significant. While the real economy certainly is growing at less than 5 percent, with slow price deflation, it is a banner year for Chinese military procurement. Considering its 450 ships, with increased projection across the Indian Ocean, and a large base in Djibouti, China is becoming strategically pre-eminent against all except the United States Navy, and even there, it can hope to match it in the near future.

The situation on the border is maybe even more critical for India for several reasons. First, China's tactics of erosion, with fake withdrawals followed by consolidation, have created facts on the ground that will be hard to erase.

Second, it can be argued that for several years after March 2020, China had even more room to move forward. The imbalance of power between Chinese and Indian ground forces is even more flagrant than those of their navies. India's military, hampered by long and weak logistical lines, could have indeed been

defeated even further. A humiliation of this magnitude would have been a catastrophe for a government that is dependent on popular votes, with an opposition ready to pounce. A patient player who calculates his risks, Xi Jinping did not push his advantage that far.

Slowly but surely, India is working to reduce its vulnerability behind the border. This is the basic argument behind its own armament drive, whether it is Made in India or procured from the West. Modi has also had to factor in the continuing dependence, even if dwindling, on Russian weapons and munitions.

All of the above has dictated India's diplomatic response and posture to the challenges from China, while paying some homage to India's history of neutralism. As India's Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar skillfully put it, his concept of "multi-alignment" reflects a desire to combine the benefits of Western support while remaining open to other partners – including Russia, and potentially with China should the opportunity for negotiations arise. The relationship with France, also preoccupied with "strategic autonomy" and seeking to be "a power for equilibrium," has been made easier by this thread that the two countries have in common.

Multi-alignment also preserves the chances for India to exercise influence over the so-called Global South. There is no shortage of countries, including India, that tend to view the Russian war on Ukraine as "a conflict among Europeans." But, conversely, there is not a long list of nations ready to side with India over China in a conflict over the Himalayas.

In fact, India hardly requests direct diplomatic support for its position over the border issue. Clearly, it wants to preserve at all costs its freedom of maneuver, and prefers to rely on concrete deals with suitable partners. Yet, on significant issues such as Gaza and the Red Sea, India has disengaged from vocal partners such as South Africa and made a notable contribution to restoring freedom of navigation. And it has most recently diminished its purchases of Russian oil, reportedly refusing to switch to payments in renminbi.

In a sign of its intensifying bid with Asian allies to collectively contain China's aggressive attitude, the Biden administration, apparently on its own initiative, has formally declared for the first time its recognition of Arunachal Pradesh as an Indian territory, and simultaneously its opposition to any unilateral move or incursion beyond the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Even prone to doubts on the longevity of such statements in a volatile American political climate, this is an achievement for India's diplomacy. Faced with a dire situation in the Himalayas, seeking support while maintaining the appearance of a balancing diplomacy on many issues, India is now pulling through these difficulties on the eve of a national election. Barring

any strategic surprise from China, it should find itself stronger after this stage.

India's predicament of confrontation with China creates growing convergence with the European Union and its member states. Economic security issues, such as the diversification of supply chains or the risks of economic coercion, clearly bring Europe and India closer. Uncertainties regarding Xi Jinping's China, its use of military power, and the extent to which it will directly challenge the international security order are clearly shared concerns in Europe and India. How to turn this shared risk assessment into real opportunities – the untapped potential question – is a pressing issue for EU-India relations.

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### **China's Cartographic Antics Signal the Logic of an Expanded Alliance With India**

12 April 2024, [NY Sun](#)

Feature, for starters, what is happening along the borders of Arunachal Pradesh.

Communist China's recent renaming of 30 areas in India's Arunachal Pradesh is the latest example of its efforts to assert territorial claims by creating facts on the ground. This marks the third such move since 2017, with 11 areas having been renamed last year. India's foreign minister has described the Sino-Indian border, along which Arunachal Pradesh lies, as "very tense and dangerous." Washington, meanwhile, continues to court Beijing.

Its response to China's advances has also amounted to little more than diplomatic thoughts and prayers. The episode marks the latest example of the Biden Administration's flawed strategy of engaging China at the expense of America's strategic allies, like India, key to containing it. Then again, too, Washington's recent flurry of diplomatic overtures to Beijing, much like those prior, raises doubts as to whether containment is even the aim.

China refers to Arunachal Pradesh as "Zangnan" and insists it is part of Tibet. It insists, too, that the renaming by its Ministry of Civil Affairs is "a legitimate move and China's sovereign right" to safeguard against "place names in foreign languages that may harm China's territorial claims." Though outwardly farcical, Beijing's renaming tactic is part of a broader suite of greyzone warfare tactics it deploys against India and around the world.

Last year, it renamed eight Russian cities along its border with Russia. Along its 2,100-mile-long disputed

border with India, known as the Line of Actual Control, Beijing has accelerated construction of military installations and villages since the 2020 clashes. The villages are akin to the artificial islands it has erected in the South China Sea. In Tibet, and to further fortify its claims, China has resettled about 250,000 Tibetans to the villages.

Some Tibetans serve as plain-clothes border patrols alongside Chinese security and military units. Unlike the Indian army, which usually conducts its patrols a few miles short of the actual control line, Chinese forces tend to patrol up to their claimed border and within Indian territory. So India last year lost access to 26 of its 65 patrolling points, effectively ceding territory to Beijing. Few beyond New Delhi appear to have noticed.

Some 200,000 Chinese troops are deployed at the border. China's presence also includes airbases, transport infrastructure, reinforced troop shelters, and weapons-storage facilities. India has responded in kind. Last month, it relocated 10,000 troops from its western border to its Chinese frontier in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, adding to the already 50,000-plus troops guarding the LAC. It has also increased its weapons imports.

Following last summer's meeting between President Biden and Prime Minister Modi it seemed that a growing share of India's weapons imports would come from America. Some have, yet not enough to suggest closer cooperation. The last substantive exchange between Messrs. Biden and Modi was at September's G-20 Summit. Meanwhile, Washington has berated New Delhi for ostensible rights violations and ties with Russia.

Russia is no chum, yet pressuring New Delhi to pivot from Moscow misunderstands its Atmanirbhar Bharat — self-reliance — doctrine. Caravans of American dignitaries to Beijing also do little to convince India of our diplomatic loyalties. As do Washington's overtures to Pakistan. This is worrying. First, the threat of renewed armed conflict along the Sino-Indian border cannot be discounted. Talks to cool tensions have largely failed.

After nearly five years of military build-up, with thousands of Chinese troops deployed in harsh conditions along the frontier, Mr. Xi also faces the challenge of solving the crisis without losing face. This makes negotiated settlement unlikely. Empty pronouncements of concern by Washington are also ineffective deterrents against Beijing's expansionist aims. If tensions rise, this could destabilize Asia in ways unmanageable by America.

The threats to our national security would be great. The second consideration ties closely to the first. India is a key ally in the effort not only to contain, but prevail over, China. Last month, its navy deployed eight

submarines in the Indian Ocean in a show of force against Beijing, and as part of ongoing efforts to stymie China's aims of linking its holdings in the South China Sea with its African interests via the Indian Ocean.

There, as along the Sino-Indian border, Beijing fabricates false narratives to advance its territorial aims. India has proven willing, and increasingly able, to counter such efforts. Yet it cannot do so if it will be in a hot border war with Beijing. It also cannot do so alone. The logic is for Washington to grasp that India is a critical ally and pivot its foreign ties accordingly. A firm stance against China's cartographic antics would be a good start.

## China-India-US power balance at stake in 2 elections

11 April 2024, [Asia Times](#)

Two elections this year may shift the triangular balance of power among China, India and the US.

Indian prime minister Narendra Modi is expected to be returned to power after the Indian elections, which run from April 19 to June 1. Modi has woven a close relationship with Donald Trump, who is seeking re-election as US president in November.

Modi established a strong relationship with Trump during his first presidency. Both men have strong nationalistic credentials, possess larger-than-life personas and focus on immigration policies. If both Trump and Modi ascend to power, India-US ties are likely to be stronger than ever.

Meanwhile, the China-US relationship is not doing well. Trump's tariffs that continued throughout Biden's presidency may be ramped up if Trump returns to the White House. In an interview with Fox News' Sunday Morning Futures, Trump announced that if he is re-elected, tariffs on Chinese goods will exceed 60%.

But that's not all. Trump intends to reduce US dependency on the Chinese economy further by phasing out all essential Chinese imports within four years,

banning US firms that outsource to China from obtaining federal contracts and preventing Chinese firms from owning key infrastructure in the energy, technology and agricultural sectors.

Moreover, since Trump had banned US firms from investing in Chinese companies that might compromise US security during his first presidency, it is likely that he would do the same during his second administration.

As the Chinese economy weakens and the youth unemployment rate remains high at 14.9%, China needs foreign funds to stimulate its ailing economy and increase exports. Unfortunately for Beijing, not only would Trump's agenda undermine China's

economic recovery but US prohibitions of American tech firms from investing in China would also batter Beijing's ambitions of becoming a world leader in artificial intelligence by 2030.

### Rise of India

Even though Trump intends to slap a baseline tariff of 10% on all imports, the high tariffs levied on Chinese imports present huge trading opportunities for India. As the US economy becomes increasingly disengaged from the Chinese economy, US firms will look to diversify their supply chains by sourcing goods elsewhere.

India is poised to be China's alternative for three reasons:

- One, India has a thriving manufacturing industry with government support.
- Two, there are many relatively youthful workers in the country who can support the industry.
- Three, the US sees India as less of a security risk than China.

Furthering ties with the US would be well received by Delhi given how Beijing's influence within south Asia has risen under the Belt and Road Initiative, China's scheme to create a global trade network.

The US has always been keen on nurturing India as a "counterbalance to China" and it seeks to contain China's influence through the security group the Quad, whose four members are the US, India, Japan and Australia.

### The tariff problem

In January 2018 Trump began an unprecedented trade war against China by imposing a 25% tariff on Chinese imports. Beijing retaliated by imposing its own tariffs on US goods, and Sino-US ties spiralled downhill culminating in the 2019 recalls of Chinese giant pandas from the San Diego zoo in California (a hugely symbolic gesture by the Chinese government).

The tariffs, which tax Chinese imports, were supposed to protect American interests. But as the US economy relies heavily on Chinese imports, US consumers and firms have had to pay more for goods. By 2019, Trump's tariffs cost the US an estimated 300,000 jobs. The US economy shrank, and in 2020 the tariffs cost the US a whopping US\$316 billion.

Beijing is worried about a second Trump administration. Since 2018, China has sought to minimize the impact of Trump's trade war by adopting a policy of self-reliance. This meant a reduction of China's imports of inputs of production into the high tech, electric and automotive industries.

However, China's ability to minimize its dependence on the international community is highly limited. The Chinese leadership knows this, and pundits speculate that a main reason why Xi attended the Asia-Pacific



Economic Cooperation meeting in San Francisco was to repair ties with the West and attract much needed foreign investment into China.

The Taiwan problem

In 2012, Trump tweeted an iconic phrase from the Chinese classic Sun Tzu's Art of War: "The Supreme Art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting." But if he had read the rest of Sun Tzu's work, he would be aware of the following: "When you surround an army, leave an outlet free. Do not press a desperate foe too hard."

Trump should realize that Washington's increased aggression towards China may only undermine Taiwan's security. For a while, Beijing's desire to unify with Taiwan was largely a nationalistic exercise aimed at legitimizing the "one China policy". But the need to acquire Taiwan has gone beyond historical fervor to economic desire, given the island state's advancement in semiconductor technology, and China's current economic woes.

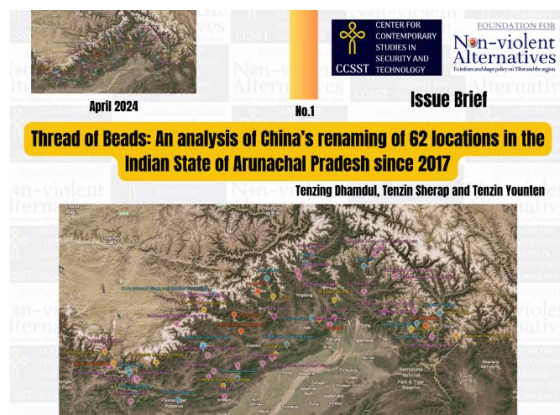
Artificial intelligence is important because it will confer major economic, technological, and military benefits to China. And if China wishes to be the world's AI leader by 2030, it needs to get its hands on semiconductor chips. If China can't access that through trade, it may acquire this technology forcefully by invading Taiwan.

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### Thread of Beads: An analysis of China's renaming of 62 locations in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh since 2017

10 April 2024, [FNVA](#)



The issue brief delves into the contentious matter of China's renaming of 62 locations in Arunachal Pradesh, India, which has escalated tensions between the two countries. This renaming, culminating in the release of

an official map of South Tibet (Zangnan) by the Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs on March 30, 2024, marks the latest development in a series of exercises aimed at asserting Chinese influence in the region.

The document highlights the significance of this renaming exercise within the broader context of Indo-China relations, drawing parallels to China's strategic moves in the Indo-Pacific region, where it has established a "String of Pearls" to extend its influence. By standardising names and issuing official maps, China seeks to solidify its territorial claims and potentially pave the way for future administrative control.

Referred to as the 'Thread of Beads', this renaming strategy underscores China's systematic efforts to encroach upon Indian sovereignty and establish a foothold in Arunachal Pradesh. This has been accompanied by longstanding tensions, including the issuance of stapled visas to residents of Arunachal Pradesh by China, indicating a pattern of provocations and challenges to India's territorial integrity.

The brief outlines how China's actions have far-reaching implications for India's national security and its long-term development goals, particularly the vision for Viksit Bharat (2047). By propagating narratives about the alleged illegality of Indian occupation in South Tibet, Chinese media exacerbates tensions and increases the likelihood of confrontation in the region.

Drawing from open-source materials, including official communications from Beijing and trending Chinese articles, the brief provides insights into the motivations behind China's renaming endeavours. Satellite imagery and official Indian government data are used to analyse the impact of these exercises on the ground, highlighting trends and patterns across the four renaming exercises conducted by China. With the case study of Tibet and Bhutan carried in understanding how China carries out these exercises to eventually annex and even occupy sovereign territory.

In conclusion, the issue brief underscores the gravity of China's renaming efforts in Arunachal Pradesh and their broader implications for regional stability and India-China relations. It calls for a nuanced understanding of China's long-term strategic objectives and emphasizes the need for proactive measures to safeguard India's territorial integrity and national security interests.

### Going Back in time: When China was clueless about McMahon Line

09 April 2024, [First Post](#)

You have probably never heard the name of Maj Gen Li Jue, a senior officer of the People's Liberation Army

(PLA) posted in Tibet in the early 1950s. He was instrumental in what became the turning point of the Communists' occupation of the Tibetan plateau, i.e. the construction of the Sichuan-Tibet and the Qinghai-Tibet highways.

As the Commander of the First Army's General Logistics Department based in Lanzhou, Gen Li was responsible for what a few years ago, President Xi Jinping called: "A Miracle in Highway Construction." It allowed China to get its supplies from the mainland instead of from India (particularly the rice supply). The two roads built by Gen Li, under the 18th Army, were inaugurated on 24 December, 1954.

When the Dalai Lama came back from Beijing after a visit in 1954-55, Maj Gen Li Jue accompanied the Tibetan leader as Intelligence Chief.

A year later, Gen Li was again in Lhasa on the occasion of the establishment of the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region; but instead of attending the functions presided over by Marshal Chen Yi, he suddenly left on an inspection tour of some areas north of the McMahon. China then knew little about Tibet's southern borders.

This was noticed by the Indian Consul General in Lhasa, PN Menon (incidentally father of the former NSA Shiv Shankar Menon), who wrote to Apa Pant, the Political Officer in Sikkim responsible for Tibet: "Li may well have been the high ranking Chinese military officer who carried out an inspection of the Tibet-Bhutan Frontier as mentioned by Chibber."

Maj SL Chhiber, then Indian Trade Agent in Gyantse, was keeping track of the important Chinese officials visiting Southern Tibet. The Indian officials in Tibet also knew that Gen Li had also visited other areas north of the McMahon line too.

Why is China raising the issue of 'Southern Tibet' now? This came back to mind when I read that for the fourth time, China has 'renamed' places in Arunachal Pradesh. A few months back, China had changed the names of 11 places in Arunachal Pradesh. The first renamed place was then Pangchen, an important location near the McMahon Line, north of Tawang.

This time too, the first renamed place was Hathong-la, the plateau facing the Thagla ridge of 1962 war memory. Why Hathong-la? China is probably not too pleased with the many articles/programmes which recently appeared in the Indian media celebrating the 65th anniversary of the arrival of Dalai Lama in India near this very spot.

Among the other names changed is Mago, the constituency of Chief Minister Pema Khandu (he has just been reelected unopposed). Also to be noted rivers such as the Kameng and the Subansiri and several spots near the disputed Fish Tails in the east of the State, have been 'renamed'.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar rightly said: "If today I change the name of your house, will it become mine? Arunachal Pradesh was, is and will always be a state of India. Changing names does not have an effect."

The point remains that for years China did not even know about the McMahon Line.

Where is the border?

To understand China's poor knowledge of Tibet Southern borders, it is necessary to go back to the Bandung Conference in 1955. An apparently moderate Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai managed to convince a credulous Indian prime minister about the 'sincerity' of the new Chinese Communist rulers. Writing about his encounter with Zhou at the Conference, Nehru said: "When asked if he wanted to push communism into Tibet, Chou En-lai [Zhou Enlai] laughed and said that there could be no such question as Tibet was very far indeed from communism. It would be thoroughly impracticable to try to establish a communist regime in Tibet and the Chinese Government had no such wish."

A few days later, the Indian prime minister told his foreign secretary about a remark of the Chinese Premier on the McMahon Line: "Although [Zhou] thought that this line, established by British imperialists, was not fair, nevertheless, because it was an accomplished fact and because of the friendly relations which existed between China and the countries concerned, namely, India and Burma, the Chinese Government were of the opinion that they should give recognition to this McMahon Line."

Zhou knows nothing about the border

At the end of 1956, as India prepared to celebrate the 2,500th anniversary of the birth of Buddha, Communist China was extremely nervous; eastern Tibet was on fire with the Khampa rebellion, while central Tibet was slowly getting contaminated by the revolt. After months of prevarication, Beijing finally allowed the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama to visit India for the celebrations. A febrile Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai came to Delhi thrice to ensure that the Dalai Lama returned to Tibet.

During one of his encounters with Nehru, Zhou admitted that India knew more about Tibet's history than China. "For example, I knew nothing about McMahon Line until recently when we came to study the border problem after the liberation of China," he said.

Zhou added that though people like him never knew about the McMahon Line till recently, the Kuomintang regime had referred to it.

Zhou also spoke of a 'secret' pact between British India and Tibet at the time of the Simla conference in 1914 when the Tibetans sat on an equal footing with the

Chinese and British India between October 1913 and July 1914.

Five years later, in April 1960, Zhou Enlai visited Delhi and had long talks with Nehru. He also had two informal encounters with Indian Defence Minister VK Krishna Menon, during which Zhou stated that China would never change its position in the Western Sector (Aksai Chin), but was open for the rest of the border. Zhou was testing the ground for a 'swap'. India would acknowledge Aksai Chin as Chinese and Beijing would recognise the North East Frontier Agency (today's Arunachal Pradesh) as Indian.

China's position on NEFA was not rigid.

Another Chinese source

An unpublished Chinese document entitled "China's reaction to Indian occupation of the territory to the south of McMahon Line, 1952-54" mentions the situation on the borders soon after the arrival of the PLA on the plateau: "Undoubtedly, Indian occupation of the McMahon line [in February 1951] officially placed the McMahon line issue before the Chinese government. As the records point out, the key problem was that the Chinese government did not release any comment nor show any resistance."

This refers to the expedition of Maj Bob Khathing in Tawang in February 1951. While Lhasa informed Delhi about the Khathing expedition, Beijing was not.

The Chinese paper comments further: "Although during this period, New Delhi agreed that China enjoyed suzerainty over Tibet, [at the same time] India treated Tawang as a local problem ...This kind of a puzzling silence from the side of the Chinese government could only be interpreted as China permitting India to expand its territories to the McMahon line. ...It was only in 1959, when India started to cross the McMahon line [in Khenzimane?] that China expressed its objection [for the first time]."

In 1951, China had not protested simply because Beijing did not know about the McMahon Line. The paper then quotes Nehru, who 20 April, 1960, during a talk with Zhou Enlai, said, "We are pained that, if the Chinese government did not agree with us, they should have expressed their objections to us. They did not say anything for 9 years."

Today, Beijing says that the area belongs to then since immemorial times in which case why didn't China express some objection after India extended its administration upto the McMahon line?

The Chinese Paper answers: "According to Chinese sources, China had adopted a policy of temporarily overlooking some issues which they intended to solve later as just after the formation of new China, there were many things waiting to be done; China was resisting America and helping North Korea. China had to first take care of peace within the country and liberate Tibet. So they did not have time to spare for

dealing with the border issues with India. They were not very alert about the Indian incursions ...India made full use of this opportunity and captured Tawang."

But the truth is that before the 1956 visit of Gen Li, China had very little knowledge about Tibet's border with India, though "they were consulting the local Tibetan government to get a clear idea about its border with India and the 1914 Simla pact [the McMahon Line]."

Today, Beijing says that the entire area has always been theirs.

However, the present claim on the state is clearly an afterthought. It should be treated as such and the Arunachal Pradesh chief minister is right in saying that his state only has a border with Tibet, with no one else.

### **Why we must take seriously China's mastery and misuse of AI espionage**

09 April 2024, [First Post](#)

In William Gibson's science fiction novel *Neuromancer*, artificial intelligence is depicted as being used for espionage and to manipulate international relations. The novel revolves around a washed-up computer hacker hired by a mysterious employer to pull off the ultimate hack. In the process, he encounters AIs that manipulate individuals and events to serve their ends, subtly influencing global power structures.

While we haven't reached the dystopian future of AI depicted in 'Neuromancer', where artificial intelligence becomes a direct threat to human existence, the world is witnessing the early stages of AI's potential for harm. Countries have begun to harness AI for espionage, sowing discord in foreign nations and inciting political unrest. These actions mark the subtle beginnings of AI's potential to manipulate and destabilise international relations, and China is at the forefront of this. This week's Microsoft Threat Intelligence report starkly illustrates this trend. It details how China has been actively using AI-generated content to exacerbate divisions within the US, Asia Pacific region. (including Japan, Taiwan and South Korea), and even in India. With AI, disinformation can be more effectively tailored and disseminated to stir conflicts, influence public opinion, and even tamper with the democratic process.

As noted in the report, with upcoming elections in India, South Korea, and the United States, there is a significant concern that Chinese, and to some extent North Korean, cyber and influence operations will intensify. These actors will likely leverage AI capabilities to target the electoral processes, aiming to weaken trust in democratic institutions and influence election outcomes.

Chinese state-sponsored hackers increasingly employ sophisticated AI-powered tools to enhance their cyber

espionage capabilities, targeting critical infrastructure, government agencies, and private companies. These advanced persistent threats (APTs) exploit vulnerabilities in networks and systems to gain unauthorised access, exfiltrate sensitive data, and potentially disrupt essential services. Moreover, China's cyber actors are adept at using AI algorithms to analyse vast amounts of stolen data, identify high-value targets, and craft highly personalised and convincing phishing attacks.

China-based espionage groups are intensifying geopolitical tensions in the South China Sea through sophisticated cyber espionage activities targeting strategic partners and rivals alike. These groups, identified by Microsoft Threat Intelligence as Gingham Typhoon, Flax Typhoon, Granite Typhoon, and Raspberry Typhoon, have been actively engaging in cyber operations that reflect China's broad strategic objectives in the region. Gingham Typhoon, in particular, has been the most active actor, targeting international organisations, government entities, and the IT sector across nearly every South Pacific Island country.

This includes complex phishing campaigns aimed at vocal critics of the Chinese government as well as diplomatic allies of China, highlighting the dual goals of extending global influence and gathering intelligence. The espionage efforts are not limited to political and military targets but also encompass economic partners, as seen in the large-scale targeting of multinational organisations in Papua New Guinea, a nation benefiting from China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects.

Moreover, the focus of these espionage activities extends to entities related to the South China Sea, where China-based threat actors opportunistically compromised government and telecommunications victims within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This targeting behaviour is particularly pronounced in the context of US military drills in the region, with Raspberry Typhoon successfully targeting military and executive entities in Indonesia and a Malaysian maritime system ahead of a multilateral naval exercise involving Indonesia, China, and the United States.

Similarly, Flax Typhoon targeted entities related to US-Philippines military exercises, while Granite Typhoon compromised telecommunication entities across Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Taiwan.

Chinese espionage groups, such as Storm-0062 and Volt Typhoon, have notably escalated tensions in the United States through targeted cyber activities against military and critical infrastructure sectors. Storm-0062's focus on aerospace, defence, and natural resources, coupled with Volt Typhoon's infiltration of

critical infrastructure networks, reflects a strategic effort to undermine US national security. These actions not only compromise the integrity of vital sectors but also raise alarm about the potential access these groups have to sensitive information, thereby stoking fears and mistrust within the US defence community and beyond.

In Taiwan, the influence operations led by Storm-1376, a Chinese Communist Party-linked actor, have injected additional strain into already tense cross-strait relations. By utilizing advanced AI to fabricate endorsements and spread disinformation during critical election periods, these actors have sought to manipulate public perception and political dynamics in Taiwan. The deployment of AI-generated content, including fake endorsements and misleading narratives, represents a sophisticated escalation in the tactics used to influence Taiwan's political landscape, exacerbating tensions between Taiwan and China.

Japan and South Korea have also been targets of Chinese influence operations, with Storm-1376 amplifying controversies and stoking discord within and between these nations. In Japan, the group spread fear and misinformation regarding the disposal of Fukushima's treated radioactive wastewater, challenging scientific assessments and sowing doubt about the safety and intentions behind the disposal. Similarly, in South Korea, the group capitalised on environmental and diplomatic concerns, using localised content to amplify protests and criticisms against the Japanese government. These actions not only exacerbate regional tensions but also aim to undermine trust in governmental and international regulatory bodies.

Moreover, the spread of conspiratorial narratives, such as the claim that the U.S. government used a "weather weapon" in Hawaii, alongside aggressive messaging campaigns in South Korea and misinformation surrounding the Kentucky train derailment, illustrates a broader strategy by Chinese espionage groups. By exploiting and amplifying regional and domestic issues, these groups aim to foster distrust, deepen societal divisions, and weaken the coherence and international standing of the United States, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. This multifaceted approach to stoking tensions reveals a complex and persistent threat that these nations must address collectively to safeguard their security and democratic processes.

To enhance the technical sophistication of India's response to AI-driven cyber espionage, NTRO could leverage state-of-the-art machine learning models and anomaly detection algorithms to improve threat detection capabilities. By adopting deep learning techniques, such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs) and recurrent neural networks (RNNs), for

analysing network traffic and user behaviour, NTRO can identify subtle patterns indicative of malicious activities that traditional systems might overlook. These advanced models can be trained on vast datasets of cyber incidents to accurately predict and detect espionage activities. Furthermore, the integration of adversarial machine learning can help NTRO's systems to anticipate and counteract evasion tactics employed by AI-powered cyber threats.

DARPA's initiatives, like the CHASE program, utilise big data analytics and machine learning to automate the detection of cyber threats on a large scale. NTRO can adopt similar methodologies, employing scalable data processing platforms and real-time analytics to continuously monitor and analyse cyber threats. This approach would enable the rapid identification of anomalous behaviours and potential cyber espionage activities, facilitating preemptive actions against such threats.

To tackle AI-generated disinformation, techniques like digital watermarking and blockchain can be employed to authenticate content and trace its origin. Advanced AI detection tools, which analyse inconsistencies in image or audio files, can be used to spot and flag deepfakes and synthetic media. These tools often utilise feature extraction methods and classification algorithms to differentiate between genuine and manipulated content. Developing and implementing these AI-driven detection tools requires a collaborative effort between government agencies, academia, and the tech industry to continuously refine algorithms and adapt to evolving disinformation tactics.

To address the challenge of AI-generated content, platforms where such content is shared must take on greater responsibility and adopt more robust measures. This necessitates a multi-layered approach involving technical, regulatory, and collaborative strategies to ensure the integrity and trustworthiness of the information disseminated. Technically, platforms need to implement advanced detection systems that can identify AI-generated content with high accuracy.

These systems should leverage the latest advancements in machine learning, such as natural language processing (NLP) and image recognition algorithms, to analyse and detect patterns or anomalies characteristic of synthetic media. For instance, employing deep learning techniques like Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) can help discern between real and AI-generated images or videos by detecting subtle discrepancies that are typically invisible to the human eye. Regulations should make platforms more responsible for the content being disseminated. Further, there is a need for more collaboration between academia, platforms

and government technical intelligence agencies to deal with AI-generated content.

Ironically, one should invoke Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* here. "Know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster," Sun Tzu wrote, signifying the importance of understanding both the capabilities of AI and the tactics of adversaries like China. To combat AI-induced espionage and division, nations must embody Sun Tzu's principles by developing a deep knowledge of AI's potential for both creation and deception, ensuring preparedness for any cyber threats. Similar to Sun Tzu's emphasis on planning and adaptation, strategic foresight must guide the defence against these cyber incursions.

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## The Emerging Great Game Chinese, Indian and American Engagement in South Asia

08 April 2024, [Stimson](#)

When it comes to great power competition, Nepal and Bangladesh are often overlooked. This paper dives in and asks three questions: What are the emerging forms of great power competition in the region? Is there evidence that the great powers are responding to each other's actions in the region, or is one power leading while the others play catch up? How are the targeted states responding to this outreach? Using both English and Chinese open-source information and in-depth interviews with academics, journalists, think tank experts, and government and embassy officials, this paper argues that states like Nepal and Bangladesh are also strategic players that are navigating Chinese, American, and Indian interests in South Asia.

### Executive Summary

In 2023, the Nepalese city of Pokhara found itself at the center of the emerging great power competition between China, India, and the United States. In June, the Chinese ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, called the new Chinese-constructed airport in Pokhara a "new chapter" in Belt and Road cooperation. The only problem with this statement was that the Nepalese government did not consider the airport part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).<sup>1</sup> Speaking before the House of Representatives, Nepal's Foreign Minister NP Saud stated, "Not a single project in Nepal under the BRI has been executed."<sup>2</sup> This anecdote speaks to some of the confusion and competition surrounding Beijing's expanding presence in South Asia, which aligns with its reenergized "peripheral diplomacy" that

President Xi Jinping has reportedly elevated to a status above ties with great powers like the United States.<sup>3</sup> Thus, China has been trying to ramp up its economic, diplomatic, and security influence in a region that has not been at the forefront of its outreach over the past several decades. This engagement is also driven to an extent by China's rivalry with India.<sup>4</sup>

China's increasing foothold in the infrastructure, energy, and trade flows of the subcontinent and its involvement in domestic politics of the region is causing unease in New Delhi and, to a lesser extent, in Washington. For New Delhi, the structural shift in the power dynamics in South Asia driven by China's increasing presence and influence in the region and more recently, violence along its disputed border with Beijing, have heightened concerns of Chinese encirclement. From Washington's perspective, South Asia is not the primary or even secondary zone of competition in the U.S.-Sino rivalry. However, countering Beijing's influence and assisting New Delhi in providing alternatives to China is ultimately part of Washington's National Security Strategy of "outcompeting China,<sup>5</sup>" and is congruent with its Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Focusing on events since the official inauguration of the BRI in 2013, this paper examines how China, the United States, and India are competing for hard power in the political, economic, and security realms. Specifically, it focuses on events since the official inauguration of the BRI in 2013. Importantly, the author takes into account the evolution of the BRI and analyzes what has been termed as the "BRI 2.0."<sup>6</sup> This research focuses on the less scrutinized cases of Nepal and Bangladesh, with references to other South Asian states, and is driven by three questions: What are the emerging forms of great power competition in the region? Is there evidence that the great powers are responding to each other's actions in the region, or is one power leading while the others play catch up? How are the targeted states responding to this outreach? The author relies on three main approaches to investigate these questions and analyze whether targeted states are extracting benefits from all powers playing against each other or developing effective strategies to pursue their interests. First, is utilizing open-source information in English, such as publicly available data and scholarly and think tank publications. Second, the analysis is reinforced by the author's in-depth interviews with academics, journalists, think tank experts, as well as government and embassy officials, conducted in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Washington D.C. in May and June of 2022, and in New Delhi in May and November of 2023. The third and final approach includes a detailed examination of open-source Chinese-language sources.

This paper puts forth several key arguments regarding Chinese, Indian, and American engagement and balance of power dynamics in South Asia. First, Beijing's activities in the region are causing a new form of great power competition between China and India, but also increasingly between the United States and China, even though Washington is primarily a peripheral power in the region. The U.S.-India relationship is also experiencing some tension as both try to navigate their own cooperation in the region. Second, regional states see the competition as an opportunity for economic development as well as a way to reduce an overreliance on India. The elites, in particular, view it as a vehicle to advance their own interests. Third, there are significant limitations for targeted states to fully realize their potential to benefit from this competition. Finally, Beijing appears to be overemphasizing the role and importance of local elites. When these elites lose power, Beijing is left scrambling to play catch up. This study begins with the case of Nepal and then goes over the case of Bangladesh. It ends with policy recommendations for the United States, India, and targeted regional states on how to better maneuver in this evolving competition. This is especially relevant as both the United States and India will undergo elections in 2024.

#### The Case of Nepal

In recent times, Nepal has experienced significant political upheaval due to its near-constant leadership transitions, with 13 governments in the last 16 years.<sup>7</sup> While India is concerned about Chinese ambitions in Nepal and is working to counter Chinese influence, China frequently hedges its bets on certain elites whose time in power is ephemeral. More recently, Washington has significantly expanded its influence by increasing its foreign assistance in the country. For example, according to the U.S. government, during 2018-2022, Washington provided Nepal with, on average, \$159,844,274 per year in foreign assistance. This amount skyrocketed to at least \$618,626,906 in 2023.<sup>8</sup>

The dominant perspective in Nepal is that it has spent much of the past 75 years under different forms of Indian hegemony.<sup>9</sup> This has taken many forms, ranging from Nehru's insistence that India's security interests triumph over Nepal's<sup>10</sup> to three de-facto Indian economic blockades of Nepal in 1962, 1988, and 2015.<sup>11</sup> The most recent blockade arose out of a dispute over a new Nepalese constitution. New Delhi responded by sealing off the border with Nepal in 2015, which caused acute shortages of goods and fuel in Nepal.<sup>12</sup> The economic blockade had a profound effect on Nepalis, who were still reeling from a massive earthquake in April that same year.<sup>13</sup> Importantly, this blockade took place under a different geostrategic

context, with China actively courting Nepal's leadership and playing the crucial role of an alternative to India.

Analysts see the blockade as a turning point in Nepal's relations with India, which catalyzed Nepal's engagement with China.<sup>14</sup> Beijing's role as a counter to New Delhi is still in its early stages, but various actions from the Chinese government have elicited responses from both New Delhi and, more recently, Washington. On the issue of Tibet, for decades, Beijing has been concerned about unsubstantiated allegations of Nepal being used by the U.S. as a base to foment instability in Tibet.<sup>15</sup> In fact, in the most recent meeting between Xi and Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal in September 2023, Nepal did not agree to sign an extradition treaty with China that would force Nepal to turn over Tibetan refugees residing in Nepal.<sup>16</sup>

#### A RAIL LINK TO CHINA?

Beijing's response to India's 2015 de-facto blockade was a critical juncture in their evolving great power rivalry in Nepal. In September 2015, just as the blockade was gaining traction, China, in a symbolic gesture, signed a protocol providing Nepal access to ports along its east coast, giving Sino-Nepalese relations a huge boost.<sup>17</sup> Former Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli visited China in 2016 and announced that a cross-border railway project would start "as soon as possible," and in May 2017, Nepal joined the BRI.<sup>18</sup> Xi's 2019 visit to Nepal also raised hopes of greater connectivity between China and Nepal. Xi stated that Nepal would be transformed from "a landlocked country to a land-linked country."<sup>19</sup> In March 2022, China's foreign minister signed an agreement on a railway technical study with Nepal's Ministry of Finance.<sup>20</sup> More recently, Beijing has provided a grant of \$300 million for a feasibility study, although the projected cost of a rail line is now estimated to have increased from \$3 billion to \$8 billion.<sup>21</sup>

The proposed railway link from Tibet to Nepal has raised concerns in India about China encroaching into India's sphere of influence. Critically, while constituencies in the Nepalese government want China to build a railway, there is near universal agreement within Nepal's policy and scholarly communities that the railway project will never happen.<sup>22</sup> The technical aspects are huge—the 121-kilometer link from Gyirong to Kathmandu would require 80 kilometers of bridges and 10 kilometers of tunnels in a geographic zone that is highly susceptible to seismic activity, making it an engineering nightmare that is not economically viable. The issue of who would fund the proposed railway is also controversial. According to Nepalese policy experts, Kathmandu wants the project funded through Chinese grants. One

of Nepal's most respected China analysts stated: "Nepal is looking for a free railway... and this puts China in an uncomfortable position"<sup>23</sup> While Nepal has signed up for the BRI and the two countries have held various meetings on the initiative, as of January 2024, out of nine BRI projects not a single one had been implemented because Nepal wants grants and not loans, and Kathmandu has different expectations from the relationship than China.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, despite Chinese talk of allowing Nepal to access Chinese ports, seven years after this offer was made, not a single shipment to Nepal has transited Chinese ports.<sup>25</sup>

Beijing also seeks to forge strong ties with elites in Nepal and has not paid adequate attention to grassroots movements and civil society, leading some Chinese analysts to argue that China needs to learn from the U.S. by paying attention to nongovernmental and community organizations.<sup>26</sup> Such investment in elites is very helpful when one's ally is in power, but it also means that China has had to hit reset multiple times when one of its preferred leaders loses power through the democratic process. Such a situation occurred in 2021 when Oli was removed from power.<sup>27</sup> Oli was widely seen as anti-India and pro-China. His replacement, Sher Bahadur Deuba, was viewed as much more pro-U.S. and India. According to a western diplomat based in Kathmandu, under Oli, "the USA was stiff-armed and Nepal fell to China. Nepal was a pro-China puppet in its voting at the UN. After the new government was formed in July 2021, Nepal went from a puppet to an irritant in China's belly."<sup>28</sup> It is important to note that the December 2022 election of Dahal may change the strategic dynamic once again in Nepal. While Beijing appeared to be happy that he won the election,<sup>29</sup> the events of 2023 were not exactly a clear victory for Beijing.

The BRI is widely perceived to be Xi's signature foreign policy initiative/legacy, thus a lack of progress on it in Nepal is a political embarrassment. The Chinese government has pressured every Nepalese delegation that visits China to show progress on the BRI, and the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu has pushed Nepali leaders to do the same. However, no progress has been made on any projects.<sup>30</sup> In a public embarrassment to Beijing, China falsely claimed that the newly completed Pokhara international airport was the BRI's flagship project in Nepal. In fact, Nepal has rejected this claim, partly due to pressure from New Delhi. Furthermore, the Indian government has also blocked international flights from India to the airport.<sup>31</sup> After Dahal's visit to China in September 2023, Nepali officials released a 40-point briefing, which did not mention the BRI. Of equal importance, two of the BRI's nine supposed projects in Nepal, the Tamor Hydroelectricity Project and the Phukot Karnali

Hydroelectric Project, were awarded to Indian companies when Dahal visited India in June 2023.<sup>32</sup>

#### **DELHI'S RESPONSE TO BEIJING**

There is a widespread perception among Nepal's policy community that India is a domineering neighbor. However, China's increasing activities in Nepal may change that in the near future because of New Delhi's fear of Kathmandu becoming too pro-Beijing. India does not have the financial ability to compete with China in Nepal, but it does have critical geographic leverage to influence Nepal in a way that China lacks. Any meaningful connectivity between China and Nepal must traverse the world's highest mountain range, the Himalayas. In the indefinite future, China is not a realistic alternative for Nepalese imports and exports. India assists Nepal in the running of the 25-kilometer Janakpur to Jainagar rail line on the Indian border, and once news broke about the possible Chinese rail line to Tibet, New Delhi proposed a line to Kathmandu through the flat lands and not the mountains, which would be much easier to construct.<sup>33</sup> Ironically, by upgrading Chinese-built electrical lines that transmit excess power to India, New Delhi is also benefiting from Chinese projects in Nepal.<sup>34</sup>

#### **ENTER WASHINGTON**

Nepal is far from occupying center stage in U.S. foreign policy. However, given its geographic location, over the past 70 years it has played a small, but important role in American policy toward China. While Washington utilized Nepal's location during the Cold War, more recently Nepal has become a regional player in the emerging triangular rivalry among China, India and the U.S. The American Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) provided a USD 500 million grant program that is designed to build and reinforce Nepalese infrastructure by helping to maintain roads, provide electricity, and increase economic development.<sup>35</sup> It was signed in 2017 but only ratified in February 2022 due to some local opposition.<sup>36</sup>

While the MCC is designed to help Nepal develop, it has been perceived by Beijing as an anti-China initiative. One Chinese commentator stated that the MCC is an attempt by Washington to "kidnap Nepal,"<sup>37</sup> while others believe it is an example of American hegemony in South Asia.<sup>38</sup>

There is wide agreement in the Chinese South Asian expert community that the MCC is part of the Indo-Pacific strategy and that Nepal was coerced into joining it.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, there is widespread belief in the Nepalese policy and the western diplomatic communities that China was behind a strong and successful propaganda campaign to discredit the MCC. One western diplomat noted: "from 2017-2018, China was winning the info-war, the U.S was not aggressive enough in this forum."<sup>40</sup>

However, the biggest policy takeaway from the MCC debate is that it was finally ratified because of the change in leadership in Kathmandu as the previous government under Oli was not willing to approve it. The key lesson from the MCC is that given its geographic location, Nepal has options when it comes to dealing with its neighbors and the U.S. With Washington closing the development assistance gap with China (the U.S. International Development Finance Corporation financing of private sector projects has increased in recent years by 15-fold<sup>41</sup>) there will likely be more projects available to Nepal.

#### **IS NEPAL PLAYING THE GAME?**

Overall, it is critical to note that from Kathmandu's perspective, China represents a great opportunity. The main policy challenge for Nepal is a critical lack of state capacity and knowledge of China that would allow Nepal to better leverage its ties with its northern neighbor. Multiple Nepalese interviewees argued that Nepal lacks the ability to deal with China. According to several of Nepal's leading China specialists, there is not a single Mandarin speaker in the entire Nepalese government, nor is there "any interest in the diplomatic corps to study China."<sup>42</sup> Another analyst pointed out that "Nepal does not even have the ability to play the China card." Nepalese journalist Amish Raj Mulmi, one of Nepal's top China experts, sums up Nepal's China challenge as follows: "While Beijing has secured its interests in Nepal, Kathmandu has failed to see beyond the 'China Card.' It has not improved its capacity to negotiate better deals. Above all, Nepal has not been able to extricate itself from the aid-beneficiary mentality and come up with a strategy that can take advantage of China's economic and infrastructural progress on its own terms."<sup>43</sup>

How much leverage does Nepal have over the great powers? China is deeply concerned with Tibetan refugees in Nepal, and Beijing has expressed concern about how Kathmandu has dealt with them.<sup>44</sup> Some Chinese commentators have argued that Nepalese politicians are "playing with fire" by "handing over their country to the U.S.," thus apparently jeopardizing the "peace and stability of the region."<sup>45</sup> Interviews revealed that the Nepalese government has not effectively used its potential leverage to play China against the other powers or, more importantly, to use Beijing's concerns as additional leverage to push forward various Nepalese goals. The cozying up to Beijing in 2015 has not produced a firm commitment to build a rail line to Tibet. With the constant changes of government and with new leaders vacillating between New Delhi and Beijing, it is extremely difficult for Kathmandu to effectively develop and operationalize a clear and sustained policy response to any of the three great powers. Nepalese leaders are clearly aware of Indian hegemony in Nepal, but the



constant game of musical chairs in leadership positions in Nepal greatly reduces room for maneuver and the ability to play powers off each other.

The prospects of Nepal taking a “non-aligned” approach to great power competition are tempting, however changes of leadership occur too frequently for any real policy to be successfully carried out and institutionalized. Kathmandu’s ability to pursue a non-aligned approach would likely be challenged both by India, which has historically exercised a form of hegemony over Nepal, and increasingly by China. Remarking on Chinese interference in Nepal’s internal affairs, Tien-Sze Fang of Taiwan’s National Tsing Hua University, writing in a Chinese-language publication, stated that “Hou Yanqi, Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, often uses her online beauty image to create a friendly atmosphere through social media. However, she also actively intervened in the political disputes within the Nepal Communist Party in an attempt to mediate conflicts and ensure that the pro-China government can remain in power.”<sup>46</sup> While the Chinese attempt failed, it is likely that neither of Nepal’s enormous neighbors would sit by passively as Kathmandu took a clear and sustained neutral stance.

#### The Case of Bangladesh

Over the past decade, Bangladesh has found itself an increasingly important actor in the evolving great power rivalry between China and India. Both Beijing and New Delhi have pledged billions of dollars in aid and loans to Dhaka, much of which is focused on developing infrastructure in Bangladesh. And the state is well-placed to take advantage of great power competition to diversify its options for economic investment and infrastructure development.

For Bangladesh, which is almost entirely surrounded by India, the ability to have an alternative to New Delhi as a source of development and military aid is not only good politics, but also essential for the country’s future.<sup>47</sup> As is the case in Nepal, citizens in Bangladesh harbor a deep sense of resentment toward what they perceive as Indian bullying. While India played the critical role in the formation of Bangladesh in 1971, and relations have been relatively positive over the past decade, lingering tension remains. For example, hundreds of Bangladeshis are killed each year by India border patrols, which contributes to a general sense of resentment of India in Bangladesh.

Anu Anwar, a fellow at the Fairbank Center at Harvard University, sums up the negative feelings by stating, “Bangladesh often feels threatened by India, while China takes care to respect Bangladeshi sensitivities.”<sup>48</sup> The bombshell comment made by Amit Shah, then the President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) (and now the Indian Minister of Home Affairs), calling Bangladeshi migrants in India

“termites” was a public relations disaster.<sup>49</sup> The Citizenship Amendment Act of 2019, which made it possible for non-Muslim refugees from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to become Indian citizens, was similarly viewed as discriminatory against Muslims.<sup>50</sup> In the words of a former Indian Ambassador, this comment was “deeply offensive” to Bangladesh, and while it suited Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s domestic agenda, it damaged India’s reputation in the region.<sup>51</sup> Besides the occasional friction between New Delhi and Dhaka, Bangladesh is of much greater strategic importance to India than it is to Beijing or Washington. Events in Bangladesh, such as infrastructure projects or water security issues, have a direct impact on India, but little impact on Beijing or Washington although interest is growing in both capitals.

#### DHAKA’S DESIRE FOR BALANCE

A good starting point to examine great power competition in Bangladesh is 2016, when Dhaka signed onto the BRI. Of greater importance, Xi visited the country and signed 27 agreements worth \$24 billion, bringing the total amount of Chinese investment in the country to \$38 billion, a sum that is equivalent to roughly 10 percent of Bangladesh’s annual GDP.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, China is the only country that Bangladesh has a defense cooperation agreement with, and Beijing is also Dhaka’s largest supplier of arms.<sup>53</sup> In fact, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, from 2018-2022, the last year data is available, China provided Bangladesh with 73 percent of the value of their arms imports.<sup>54</sup>

As will be discussed below, many of these proposed Chinese projects have not materialized, but New Delhi did respond directly to China’s \$24 billion financial package to Dhaka. India provided a \$5 billion line of credit to Bangladesh in 2017, the largest ever credit line offered by India to any country. The credit was designed to “wean away Dhaka from China” and is allocated towards the construction of infrastructure projects.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, concerns over Dhaka’s embrace of Beijing caused New Delhi to solve its territorial dispute with Dhaka in 2015 when 162 pieces of land were exchanged on both sides of the border.<sup>56</sup> Overall, India has provided nearly \$8 billion in lines of credit to Bangladesh. While much of this is tied to improving connectivity between India and Bangladesh, C. Raja Mohan, a senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New Delhi, argues that the Modi government feels that India “needs to do something” about the geopolitical competition with Beijing.<sup>57</sup>

Great power competition also manifested itself in the proposed Chinese port deal at Sonadia, where China had been lobbying Bangladesh for decades to

construct a port. In 2016, India, Japan, and the United States put pressure on Dhaka to cancel the Chinese project and in its place a Japanese port project in Matarbari, which is close to Sonadia, was announced.<sup>58</sup> The apparent reason for cancellation was lobbying by the United States, India and Japan, who were concerned that the port would provide China with an advantage in the emerging maritime rivalry in the Indian Ocean.<sup>59</sup> More recently, New Delhi and Beijing have both been funding the port of Mongla in Bangladesh, the second largest in the country. After it was revealed in December 2022 that New Delhi had selected Egis as the project management consultant for the port upgrade, Beijing confirmed that it was also willing to fund the port. Rear Admiral Mohammad Musa, the Chairman of the Mongla Port, stated that the two projects were in different sections of the port and would not “collide with each other.”<sup>60</sup> Munshi Foyez Ahmed, a former Bangladeshi Ambassador to China, acknowledged the competition between India and China in Bangladesh, and pointed out that Bangladesh needs to manage the competition carefully.<sup>61</sup>

While some Indian infrastructure projects in Bangladesh are designed to counter Chinese initiatives, not all can be attributed to a tit-for-tat rivalry model.<sup>62</sup> India has long sought access for its northeastern states to Bangladeshi ports instead of the port of Kolkata in West Bengal. Such access was halted as a result of the 1965 war with Pakistan, and the alternative route is time- and energy-intensive. For example, goods traveling from Agartala, the capital of Tripura, to Kolkata must pass through Guwahati, which takes over 30 hours for the 1,600-kilometer journey. Transit through Dhaka can reduce the time to 10 hours for the 550 kilometer trip.<sup>63</sup> To help solve this challenge, the Maitri Setu (“Friendship Bridge”) on the Feni river was inaugurated by Modi in 2021. The bridge will significantly enhance connectivity between Bangladesh and India’s northeast.<sup>64</sup> Joint infrastructure projects also extend to energy projects. The 1320-megawatt Maitree Super Thermal Power Station, scheduled to be Bangladesh’s largest and valued at \$1.5 billion, is being set up by a joint venture between India’s NTPC Limited (formerly known as National Thermal Power Corporation) and the Bangladesh Power Development Board.<sup>65</sup>

#### CHINA REPLACING INDIA?

It is tempting to view China’s replacement of India as the dominant power in South Asia as a forgone conclusion. However, so far, this is not correct. Six years after the initial announcement, the often-quoted number of \$24 or \$38 billion that China supposedly earmarked for Bangladesh has not materialized.<sup>66</sup> In addition to these challenges, there is very little, if any, transparency of the projects in

Bangladesh. One of Bangladesh’s leading China scholars stated that “nobody knows how many BRI projects are actually being implemented.” Another expert stated that only one-third of projects are actually being implemented, while a western diplomat pointed out that Bangladesh came up with a large wish list of projects and then shopped it around in order to be less reliant on one state.<sup>67</sup> In an echo of the challenges of state capacity in Nepal, multiple interviewees pointed out that Bangladesh lacks the ability to properly implement many of the infrastructure projects that they are requesting. Another said that “Bangladeshi foreign policy is ad hoc and has no real agency. It just goes from deal to deal and it all depends on the Prime Minister whose goal is to stay in power...the Prime Minister prefers big ticket items that can be completed before elections and look good on television.”<sup>68</sup>

Chinese analysts are aware of the geopolitical competition being played out in Bangladesh. Fudan University’s Lin Minwang argues that China needs Bangladesh strategically in order to hedge against strategic containment.<sup>69</sup> Other Chinese commentators have argued that India believes that China will attempt to replace India’s dominance in South Asia and that China’s deepening of ties in South Asia has minimized and even excluded India’s influence in the region.<sup>70</sup> One Chinese project that does merit a quick note is the Padma Bridge. In 2012, the World Bank pulled out of this important infrastructure project citing problems with corruption.<sup>71</sup> However, from 2019 and 2021, Beijing provided Sheikh Hasina’s government \$2.3 billion per year in official development assistance and other official flows. This funding was critical in finishing the Padma Bridge, as well as other projects including power plants, and the elevated highway in Dhaka. Critically for Sheikh Hasina, who was re-elected in the controversial January 2024 general election, the Padma Bridge is in her home district.<sup>72</sup>

Beijing has not hesitated to pressure Dhaka when it feels its interests are under threat. Beijing warned Dhaka to avoid joining the Quad consisting of Japan, India, Australia, and the United States (even though no offer was made to Dhaka to join.) China’s ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming reportedly stated “obviously it will not be a good idea for Bangladesh to participate in this small club of four (Quad) because it will substantially damage our bilateral relationship.” Bangladesh’s Foreign Minister, Dr. AK Abdul called the ambassador’s comment “very unfortunate” and “aggressive.”<sup>73</sup> With this example aside, New Delhi and Washington would do well to realize that for many in Dhaka China still represents an opportunity.

#### WASHINGTON’S HITS AND MISSES

A final note is warranted on the high-level American visits to Bangladesh in January 2023 and the peculiar Chinese response. On January 7, Eileen Laubacher, the senior director for South Asia at the National Security Council, arrived in Bangladesh for a four-day visit, where she met with senior Bangladeshi officials including the foreign minister.<sup>74</sup> She was followed by Donald Lu, the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, who visited Bangladesh from January 12-15.<sup>75</sup> Oddly enough, in the early morning hours of January 10, Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang landed at Dhaka for what the Chinese Foreign Ministry called a “technical stop” where he met with the Bangladeshi foreign minister.<sup>76</sup> Washington’s challenge with its dealings with Bangladesh are for the time being less about worrying about what Beijing is up to in the country and more about how American leaders should approach an increasingly autocratic leadership in Dhaka. In 2021, the Biden Administration did not invite Bangladesh to its democracy summit. While this may have played well in certain sectors in Washington, the Chinese envoy to Bangladesh, Li Jiming, came out in support of Dhaka.<sup>77</sup> Also in December 2021, the U.S. Treasury Department slapped sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion (Bangladesh’s elite paramilitary force) for serious human rights violations.<sup>78</sup> In addition, Washington increased pressure on Dhaka in September 2023, when it began to impose sanctions against individuals believed to be involved in undermining the then upcoming 2024 election.<sup>79</sup> Directly addressing American criticisms over the declining level of democracy in Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina stated that it does not matter if someone does not go on a 20-hour flight crossing the Atlantic Ocean and “that there are other countries and other continents in the world, we will make friends with those continents crossing other oceans.”<sup>80</sup> These comments demonstrate the challenge U.S. leaders face when balancing American values with states that are drifting away from democratic institutions and norms. Publicly scolding Dhaka over its deteriorating levels of democracy will only play into the hands of Beijing. Furthermore, while Washington harbors concerns about the increasing autocratic nature of governance in Dhaka, New Delhi sees the regime as providing regional stability and limiting Beijing’s influence in the country. There are also concerns in India that, with its recent pressure on Dhaka, Washington may take a more forward-leaning approach to policy in Bangladesh that could generate friction with New Delhi’s preferred approach.<sup>81</sup>

Ultimately, Bangladesh is attempting to “spread projects around to different countries”<sup>82</sup> and is more concerned with giving each great power a piece of the pie, as opposed to playing each power of the other.

Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen articulated the delicate diplomacy Bangladesh was conducting between the great powers when he stated that maintaining good ties with global powers such as the United States and China is a “challenging” task. More importantly, he stated that the “U.S., China might have their own problems...that is their headache, not ours. We want to maintain good relations with both.”<sup>82</sup>

#### Recommendations and Conclusion

The two cases highlighted in this paper point to an evolving great power competition in South Asia. The drivers of this competition are complex and decisionmakers need to be careful in assigning too much weight to one or two politically convenient explanations. For example, China’s controversial involvement in Sri Lanka is not just about security and competition with India, it also involves substantial commercial opportunities for Chinese entities. The widely held perception that China is engaging in “debt trap diplomacy” has been discredited by some western analysts and scholars who have taken the time to carefully analyze the data and draw conclusions. For instance, the Lowy Institute points out that Beijing is not responsible for Sri Lanka’s economic crisis and finds that Eurobonds account for the largest proportion (36 percent) of Sri Lanka’s sovereign debt, while China’s share is between 10-20 percent.<sup>83</sup>

Washington and New Delhi need to be aware that the BRI is a complicated, contradictory, and in many ways self-defeating Chinese initiative. It lacks cohesion and suffers from enormous bureaucratic infighting, a paucity of reliable data, and perhaps most importantly a profound lack of understanding of the countries where it is spending hundreds of billions of dollars. The idea that the BRI is a well-oiled machine based on solid evidence and a coherent grand strategy is false. Professor Zhao Suisheng, an expert on the BRI, argues that the BRI is poorly coordinated and is fragmented. He sees the BRI as being politically driven with resulting projects not always financially viable.<sup>84</sup> By 2018, the Chinese government started to become aware that many BRI projects were at the risk of becoming white elephants or were not economically viable for political, economic, or security reasons (or all three combined). A critical challenge for Beijing then and now is a sheer lack of area experts on countries with major BRI projects. Importantly, we are now encountering the “BRI 2.0.” China has learned many valuable lessons from its initial mistakes and is quickly changing course. For example, Beijing is completely altering its lending process and is rapidly decreasing the role of policy banks, relying more on commercial banks. Perhaps of greater importance, Beijing is now outsourcing risk management to foreign lending institutions such as the European Bank for

Reconstruction and Development.<sup>85</sup> This new approach should significantly reduce the waste and redundancies in many of previous BRI projects. It is critical for policymakers in the United States and India to realize that the smaller South Asian states see China as an opportunity in multiple domains. Attempts to force them to distance themselves from Beijing will likely fail and may actually be counterproductive. South Asia suffers from significant infrastructure shortfalls, and Chinese loans and grants are seen as essential to improving living conditions and livelihoods in the region. China has deep pockets and is willing to finance infrastructure projects that may not be profitable but are nevertheless critical for a state's development and provide rent-seeking opportunities for corrupt elites. The non-democratic nature of China enables its leaders to spend money on BRI projects, but Washington needs to be aware that these projects may fail or never materialize. Instead of competing project-for-project or dollar-for-dollar with Beijing, what American leaders can do instead is to finance projects in these countries that are economically viable or help reinforce state capacity.

In particular, U.S. policymakers could consider the following courses of action:

Expand the Regional China Officer Program to smaller states in South Asia: Washington needs to rapidly build up its Regional China Officer Program (RCO), which posts China-focused U.S. foreign services officers in key states around the globe. As of early 2024, there were no RCOs based in Nepal or Bangladesh. Specifically, the RCO can examine Chinese financial, security, political and social activities and both share them with American partners and engage local authorities. This will help to increase transparency.

Develop state capacity in smaller South Asian states: The BRI suffers from an enormous lack of transparency on the part of both China and targeted countries. Washington should work with in-country bureaucrats and high-level officials as well as civil society groups and local media to encourage transparency on such issues. Additional funding should be made available to bring NGO leaders and local journalists to the U.S. for extended training sessions and even degree programs. The focus should be on areas, such as technical and legal assistance, where the long-term value of institutions and rule of law are emphasized. This is not in China's playbook and it is an enormous asset that the U.S. has in its arsenal.

Continue host country engagement across the political spectrum: The U.S. needs to play the long-game and continue to engage in host country civil society. In many states, China places too much emphasis on individual leaders who are removed from office or are defeated at the ballot box. This is a strategic liability for Beijing that Washington and New Delhi can

capitalize on by allowing China to score own goals. By focusing on civil society, Washington can capitalize on its soft power appeal in Bangladesh, especially of American universities and the U.S. as an export market.

Overall, great power competition in South Asia is in its infancy. Now that China has emerged from its Covid-19 self-isolation and is reworking the BRI, its interests in the region will continue to expand, thus causing concern in New Delhi about Chinese ambitions in the region. India is also watching the United States as it engages with Nepal and Bangladesh in ways that are not always in India's interests, causing tensions in the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. Regardless of whether we are now witnessing "Peak China," if BRI 2.0 is able to avoid the mistakes of I 1.0, it will be a much more formidable force for both India and the U.S. to navigate.

### New Chinese Gray Zone Warfare Against India

06 April 2024, [Kashmir Observer](#)



*Indian army soldiers at the Indo-China border in Bumla/ PTI*

The Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh grabbed headlines in the last few weeks over Chinese protestation against PM Modi's visit to the state on March 11 and again on March 25 in response to Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar rebuffing Beijing's claims as ludicrous. Following closely on this recent tussle, Beijing on March 28 commemorated the 'Democratic Reform Day' in Xizang (Mandarin term for Tibet) which marked the 65th anniversary of Tibet's 'liberation from earlier feudal serfdom'. What is of significance is that the above mentioned celebrations were held in the newly built Xiaokang (well-off) villages constructed along the borders of India and Bhutan. This action, in the light of recent events including the India- China border stand-off since 2020 and negotiations over settling the Sino- Bhutanese boundary (with implications for India), can be seen as a grey zone warfare tactic by Beijing.

Grey zone warfare broadly refers to the methods of indirect warfare or competition between nation states

which lie in the area between peace and full-scale war. It includes a vast array of options such as economic coercion, blockade of vital supplies, cyberwarfare, disinformation, and narrative building and influencing campaigns. China is no stranger to such warfare given its pre-eminence in ancient Sinic military treatises such as *The Art of War* and the application of such tactics against India and Taiwan.

With respect to the Chinese celebrations above, the first aspect to note is the location i.e. the Xiaokang villages. These villages, numbering around 628, have been built along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) straddling the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and the Indian territories of Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh under the ostensible purpose of poverty alleviation and development in border areas; however, it is alleged that they are dual-use in nature and has been built with the purpose of stationing PLA troops and equipment. In addition to the LAC, these villages have also been constructed along the disputed Sino-Bhutan boundary in the backdrop of negotiations between Beijing and Thimphu. More worrying for India is the fact that such villages have also cropped up in the strategically sensitive Doklam tri-junction which has the potential implications for the Siliguri Corridor connecting the Indian mainland to its North-Eastern region. It is also to be underlined that Doklam is one of the main areas of dispute between Bhutan and China and of strategic importance for India which saw a tense 73 days standoff between New Delhi and Beijing in 2017.

In terms of grey zone warfare, the celebrations in the villages situated along the above disputed areas were meant to substantiate China's claims over the latter and in a way, normalise the occupancy of the same. Moreover, the celebration of the Democratic Reform Day provides an occasion for Beijing to highlight the 'development and prosperity' of these villages and thereby buttress its claims towards the seemingly non-military character and aims of the settlements. At the same time, the timing of the celebrations immediately following the Chinese response to Indian to the rebuttal on Arunachal Pradesh are also aimed at reinforcing and reiterating Beijing's claim over the region which it refers to as Zangnan or southern Tibet. In addition, the emphasis on 'continuous, rapid development' of the border as well as announcement of 'promoting frontier prosperity, reinforcing border defence, border security, and the happiness of border residents' can be seen as an apparent jibe aimed at recent Indian attempts at strengthening border infrastructure along the LAC including the recently inaugurated all-weather Sela Tunnel reaching the strategic region of Tawang which drew the Chinese uneasiness on 9 March. Similar messages have also been conveyed through celebrations in villages to

Bhutan and indirectly to India by holding events in villages at the Yadong county situated in the tri-junction.

What should India do?

Along with the current efforts at addressing the infrastructure deficit along the border, India should learn and adopt similar tactics of grey zone warfare. For starters, there should be frequent visits by the Prime Minister and other Central Ministers to Tawang—a region coveted by China both for its strategic location as well as its importance in Tibetan Buddhism. Such regular visits would help in reinforcing the already evident Indian sovereignty over not just Tawang, but the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh. This would also serve as a corrective to the earlier administration's stance of not undertaking frequent high-profile visits to Tawang during official tours of the state of Arunachal Pradesh due to apprehension over Chinese actions. Along with this, such high-level delegation including the PM should actively take part in the Statehood Day celebrations of Arunachal Pradesh on 20th February every year to further buttress the above action. Along with the implementation of the Vibrant Village Programme aimed at bolstering the development of remote villages along the LAC, in a way similar to the Chinese celebrations, India too should regularly highlight the achievements and development of these areas to not only stem the migration from these areas but also counter Chinese attempts at psychological warfare.

On the diplomatic front, India should use its current international weight and multiple partnerships to influence its partners to issue statements similar to the US reiterating Indian sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh while condemning baseless Chinese irredentist claims. In this regard, New Delhi can reach out to countries like Philippines whose sovereignty claims in the South China Sea (SCS) has been supported by India including calls to adhere to the 2016 ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration on the same. Similarly, India can seek out other partners such as Japan and Vietnam to do the same in exchange for stronger support to their claims in the SCS and other benefits.

Narrative constitutes a vital stratagem of grey zone warfare which China has never shied away from using. In response to its narrative of historical control over Xizang (Tibet) since time immemorial, India should invest its cultural resources in developing its own narrative highlighting the historical, religious and cultural links between Tibet and the Indian subcontinent as well as recognising the existence of separate Tibetan kingdom and culture militarily occupied and annexed by the People's Republic of China in 1950. In addition, as a response to the commemoration of 28 March, the Government of

India can participate in the official events organised by the Tibetan Government in Exile such as the annual anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising of 1959 on 10 March and unofficial presence during Tibetan Independence Day celebrations on 13 February, thereby highlighting the violent history of the Chinese occupation often brushed under the carpet. Moreover, the proposal of granting Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama should also be considered along with allowing the latter to make frequent visits to the historic Tawang monastery— an important seat of Tibetan Buddhism which would also bolster the legacy and connection of India with the same. At the same time, as a rebuff to the usage of terms like Xizang and Zangnan, India should use the term Tibet to refer to the region and should even skilfully utilize the term 'Indo-Tibetan border' to refer to the LAC in unofficial responses as done by certain quarters of the government in 2020. Consideration should also be given to counter-measures such as re-naming places in Tibet as a signal of stronger Indian assertiveness.

With regard to Bhutan, while India has increased its outreach and level of support to the country, New Delhi also should also strive to increase the level of its commitment and re-assurance to backing Bhutan's claims including supporting Thimphu's voice in the international fora. Such strong support would not only help India's own strategic concerns but also raise its standing in its near and extended neighbourhood as a trusted and reliable partner vis-a vis China. New Delhi should especially try to channelise robust assistance towards aiding Bhutan in developing its own border areas with China and its military capabilities. Such efforts would perhaps encourage Thimphu to emulate similar grey zone tactics as mentioned above on its own accord.

As outlined by Dr S Jaishankar in his book *Why Bharat Matters* the crux of the positive development of the Sino- Indian ties lie in 'three mutuals- mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests'. A cursory glance at the history of the ties since 1950 will show that while New Delhi has adhered to the three 'mutuals', Beijing has and continues to violate them till date. Hence, it is time, to employ the same tactics from China's own playbook to make As outlined by Dr S Jaishankar in his book *Why Bharat Matters* the crux of the positive development of the Sino- Indian ties lie in 'three mutuals- mutual respect, mutual sensitivity and mutual interests'. A cursory glance at the history of the ties since 1950 will show that while New Delhi has adhered to the three 'mutuals', Beijing has and continues to violate them till date. Hence, it is time, to employ the same tactics from China's own playbook to make Beijing realise that 'it would get as hard as it

gives' which should hopefully make it curtail its ambitions and exhibit responsible behaviour.

### The China-India-US Imbroglia

05 April 2024, Anuttama Banerji, [Inkstick](#)

The relations between these powers are fraught and entangled.

Earlier this week, US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping had a phone call in which they discussed several contentious issues including fighting narcotics production, China's support of Russia during the war in Ukraine, the conflict in the Middle East, the Houthi rebels attacks on commercial vessels, and the Taiwan conflict. The call followed Xi's meeting with US business leaders last week, when the Chinese premier attempted to bolster investment in China, and Xi's visit to the United States in November 2023. The various dialogues show the building rapprochement between the two countries following earlier tensions exacerbated by Nancy Pelosi's 2022 visit to Taiwan, and the Chinese spy balloon episode.

These engagements resumed at a time when Biden canceled a planned visit to India's Republic Day celebrations along with the postponed QUAD summit. The US has also continued to adopt a stern outlook over India's involvement in the assassination bid against Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a US national and Sikh separatist.

Considering these developments, it can be argued that the US and China are making a formal attempt to "manage" their ties in such a way that cooperation coexists with conflict in the Indo-Pacific, and that the US relationship with India — despite continued momentum in defense ties — requires a fair bit of course correction. Moreover, these developments suggest that despite the US viewing India as a strategic bulwark against China, the India-US bilateral partnership cannot rely on countering the perceptible Chinese threat in the Indo-Pacific alone. India will have to focus on both traditional and non-traditional security areas like space, Artificial Intelligence, and technology to strengthen its enduring partnership with the US.

#### The China-India-US Imbroglia

Over the last decade, India and the United States have emerged as close allies in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific as China has attempted to change the "rules based international order" while expanding its naval and maritime influence in the South China Sea and the Indo-Pacific. China's actions have brought India and the US closer. In 2016 the US designated India a "Major Defense Partner" and has continued to facilitate military sales, calling the country "vital" for a "shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific."

The strengthening US-India ties came when Chinese incursions increased considerably on India's border especially in the crises in Doklam in 2017 and Galwan in 2020. The two sides have also signed the four foundational agreements in recent years that the US deem essential to conduct defense trade with any partner or ally country. India also recently bought MQ 9B drones and the FE-414 engines — crown jewels of American technology — to manage the Chinese threat along its terrestrial and maritime borders and improve Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.

However, while the US is keen to assist India in balancing the Chinese threats, the US is reticent for the crisis to escalate to a war that could involve them. Just as the US is assessing the extent of support India could offer in a potential Taiwan contingency, India too is keen to evaluate the level of reciprocal support that the US could offer in the event of a crisis with China on its borders.

This dilemma is at the heart of the India-US bilateral relationship today. In Foggy Bottom and Raisina Hill, both sides ponder the nature of reciprocal support that either could get in the advent of a real conflict.

Moving Ahead: Advantage China?

In light of these uncertainties, the US will attempt to manage its relationship with China and build its ties with India simultaneously. India will have to remain cognizant of this fact as it also plays a balancing game: navigating its ties with both the US and Russia in a bid to maintain its strategic autonomy and remain "multi-aligned." The US, meanwhile, will attempt to wean India away from Russia despite India's age-old partnership with Moscow that has seen the latter supporting India on contentious issues like Kashmir at the United Nations.

Interestingly, in this imbroglio, China will have the advantage, at least in the short term.

China will continue to call the shots vis-à-vis its ties with Washington as the Biden administration would like to have a modicum of better ties with Beijing to present to its domestic electorate before the upcoming 2024 elections. Biden's call to assist China in its economic recovery and the US's wish to keep its strategic diplomatic engagements through economic integration at multiple levels with the Chinese attest to this fact.

India will have to closely watch the unfurling events as Beijing and Washington engage each other. While a tight embrace between the US and China is unlikely considering the plethora of unresolved issues — ranging from Taiwan to the freedom of navigation and overflight, trade wars, semiconductors, access to resources, and human rights abuses on the part of the Chinese continue to limit the scope of the relationship

— the US's conciliatory approach towards China may harm Indian interests.

China is India's next-door neighbor and India faces an imminent threat from the Chinese.

India and China are geopolitical rivals and China has increased its footprint in India's strategic backyard of South Asia in recent years. In this regard, among many controversial projects.

Managing China's Influence

China is pursuing the "String of Pearls" Project in the region — with the Chinese building bases with potential for dual-use in strategic ports like Gwadar, Pakistan, Hambantota, Sri Lanka, and Chittagong, Bangladesh among others potentially encircling India. China's all-weather partnership with Pakistan has made the latter a supplicant state under China's Belt and Road Initiative. Sri Lanka, India's southern neighbor, is also entrapped in debt diplomacy after it leased out the port of Hambantota to China for 99 years. Moreover, the strategically important island of Maldives has also extended its security partnership with China, with Beijing offering "non-lethal" military weapons to Malé.

India is therefore keen to manage China's growing influence in South Asia and potentially views Washington as an ally in this endeavor.

China will continue balancing its multiple relationships while pursuing its goals: engaging the US while supporting Russia in the ongoing war with Ukraine, and pushing for India to acquiesce to the idea of a China-led South Asia — all of which falls under the umbrella of Tianxia, the vision of a Chinese world order.

Intricate Entanglement

India will have to be a careful observer of these developments as it keeps the cash on defense sales flowing while addressing the US's concerns associated with the Pannun assassination attempt. Although the India-US relationship has broadened and deepened in recent years with the growing defense ties, the structural impediments remain as India continues to navigate the US regulatory measures like International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR).

While the India-US relationship extends from the "seas to the stars," India will have to get the basics right to ensure that enduring ties with New Delhi continue to receive bipartisan support in Washington and so that Washington's attempted rapprochement with Beijing does not isolate New Delhi. While engagement at the bilateral level will remain the crux of the relationship, India could potentially strengthen its position within multilateral fora like the QUAD, I2U2, and the Combined Maritime Forces through support to US initiatives to enable more US support vis-à-vis China. India's handling of the pirates in the Red Sea is an example of India stepping up to deal with mutually

relevant concerns. To ensure more convergence with the US in the maritime domain, India could also join Operation Prosperity Guardian, the US-led multinational coalition designed to fight the Houthi rebels. Overall, the dance between the US, China, and India remains an intricate entanglement, and no one wants to trip. Geopolitical considerations will continue to dominate the political thinking and decision-making of these nations in the years to come.

### **China's Unquenched Territorial Greed: What Is The Limit? – OpEd**

04 April 2024, [Eurasia Review](#)

Many discerning observers around the world, who are taking a closer look at China's claims on the territory of other countries, inevitably could conclude that China's territorial greed today is similar to that of Adolf Hitler's, which ultimately caused World War II.

Occupation of Tibet. Several decades back, China aggressively entered Tibet, overpowered the Tibetans who resisted its aggression and mercilessly massacred a large number of them. Today, China is sitting pretty with full control over the Tibet region and is hiding that country with an "iron curtain" from the eyes of the world. Outside China and probably within China, most people do not know what is really happening in Tibet at present.

After the onslaught on Tibet, with no worthwhile protest from other countries about China's act of aggression, China appears to have convinced itself that it can have its way to satisfy its territorial greed by occupying other regions at its will.

Threat to invade Taiwan

China claims that Taiwan should be part of it, though there is no justification for this. Taiwan emerged as separate region after a civil war, and if China claims that Taiwan should belong to it, then Taiwan too can have equal claim to China territories.

On several occasions, China has threatened to invade Taiwan. However, unlike in the case of Tibet when China's aggression virtually went unchallenged, the Taiwan region has the support of Western countries. This has prevented China from militarily operating against Taiwan, even as China's territorial greed persists.

South China Sea / Senkaku Islands

The South China Sea is an area where China claims its sovereignty and is rejecting the claims of other countries including the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan. China-Philippines tensions are now rising around a flash point in the South China Sea, due to China's aggressive posture.

There is territorial dispute regarding the Senkaku Islands between Japan China and Taiwan. It is now claimed by China that the Senkaku Islands belong to it

and there is considerable tension in the region due to China's claim and aggressive postures. China is not ready to discuss the issue and arrive at an amicable solution.

Occupation of Indian territory

China launched a war against India in the 1962 and is now holding thousands of hectares of Indian territory as its own, which was occupied by China during the war. Frequently, China is creating issues in the border with India and skirmishes between Chinese and Indian soldiers are becoming frequent.

Claim on India's Arunachal Pradesh

China now claims that Arunachal Pradesh in India should belong to China and is doing everything to stress its claim, short of going for a full-fledged war with India

Recently, China released a fourth list of thirty new names of various places in Arunachal Pradesh, amid China's stepped up assertions in recent weeks to re-emphasise its claim over the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chinese Civil Affairs Ministry released the first list of the standardised names of six places in "Zangnan" (the name given by China for Arunachal Pradesh ) in 2017. The second list of 15 places was issued in 2021, followed by another list with names for 11 places in 2023.

The naming of places in India's Arunachal Pradesh by China indicates the height of arrogance of that government and its confidence that it can do anything against other countries and get away with it.

Obviously, the unquenched territorial greed of China makes it behave with such aggressive postures against other countries.

Stranglehold over Pakistan

By tempting and persuading Pakistan to implement the economic corridor project, China has extended huge loans to Pakistan to implement such projects, even as China knows that Pakistan will never be able to repay the loans and accrued interest in the foreseeable future. Thus, Pakistan has now become highly dependent on China and is indebted to it.

In the process, China has taken control of the Gwadar port in Pakistan and is creating access to transport material from the port to China. Obviously, China will never let go of its vice like grip over Pakistan in future

Take over Hambantota port in Sri Lanka  
Like what China has done in Pakistan, it has extended a huge loan to Sri Lanka and implemented projects in Sri Lanka, which benefited Chinese industries and the economy of China, more than that of Sri Lanka.

With Sri Lanka is facing a debt trap, China has taken over Hambantota port on 99 year lease from Sri Lanka in lieu of the loan that Sri Lanka received from China.

A 99 year lease is a very long period and the ground reality is that China will never give up its grip over the



Hambantota port, which area ultimately may become an extended territory of China for all practical purposes.

What could be the ultimate limit of China's greed?

It is generally said that greed has no limits as such. That said, the ultimate limit of greed could happen, when the level of greed makes an individual or a group or a country to overreach in satisfying its unquenched greed. Such a scenario would cause a huge resistance from the people in the affected regions, creating an insurmountable problem for the entity with the unquenched greed.

The British empire, which expanded the territory under its control in different continents for several centuries, ultimately lost all such territories and remains as just one of many nations in the world now. Its past glory is now a matter of distant memory. China should derive the right lessons from the experience of the British empire and allow other countries to live in peace.

### **Arunachal Pradesh Again: Why China Keeps Coining New Names For Places In Other Countries**

01 April 2024, [ETV Bharat](#)

For the fourth time since 2017, China has released a new list of names for places and sites in the northeast Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, in what is the latest manifestation of Beijing's claims over territories in other countries.

The latest list released by China's Ministry of Civil Affairs contains new names for 30 places and sites in Arunachal Pradesh. These include 11 residential areas, 12 mountains, four rivers, one lake, one mountain pass and a piece of land. All the names have been given in Chinese characters, Tibetan, and Pinyin, the Roman alphabet version of Mandarin Chinese, the South China Morning Post reported.

China first released a list of new names for six places in Arunachal Pradesh in 2017. This was followed by a second list of 15 places in 2021, and then a third list of names for 11 places in 2023. China refers to Arunachal Pradesh as Zangnan or south Tibet, a territory Beijing claims to be a part of the Tibet Autonomous Region. In Mandarin Chinese, Zang refers to Tibet and "nan" means south.

India is not the only country where China has coined new names for places and sites. One notable example of China renaming places in other countries is its actions in the South China Sea. China has asserted territorial claims over various islands, reefs, and shoals in the region, many of which are also claimed by other countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and Taiwan. Despite international disputes

over sovereignty, China has renamed several features in the South China Sea.

China has renamed several features within the Paracel Islands, known as the Xisha Islands in Chinese. For example, Woody Island, which is also claimed by Vietnam, has been given the Chinese name Yongxing Island.

Similarly, China has renamed features within the Spratly Islands, known as the Nansha Islands in Chinese. For instance, Fiery Cross Reef, claimed by China, the Philippines, and Vietnam, has been given the Chinese name Yongshu Reef. China refers to Scarborough Shoal, which is also claimed by the Philippines, as Huangyan Island in Chinese. China's renaming of this feature reflects its claim of historical sovereignty over the area.

In the East China Sea, a group of uninhabited islands referred to as Senkaku Islands in Japanese, are called Diaoyu Islands in Chinese. It is worth mentioning here that China has released the latest list of new names for places and sites in Arunachal Pradesh, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the northeastern state last month. During the course of his visit, Modi inaugurated the Sela Tunnel at an altitude of 13,000 feet to provide all-weather connectivity to strategically-located Tawang. The tunnel is also expected to ensure better movement of troops along the frontier region.

As expected, China protested Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh, which New Delhi immediately dismissed. "We reject the comments made by the Chinese side regarding the visit of the Prime Minister to Arunachal Pradesh," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said in response to media queries regarding the comments from the Chinese side.

"Indian leaders visit Arunachal Pradesh from time to time, as they visit other states of India. Objecting to such visits or India's developmental projects does not stand to reason," Jaiswal said. According to MS Pratibha, Associate Fellow at the East Asia Centre in the Manohar Parrikar Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, China resorts to this tactic of coining new names for places in other countries whenever it feels that its sovereignty is being challenged.

"This is something they generally do in Chinese maps to show to their people that these places are part of China's territory," Pratibha told ETV Bharat. India and China have had a longstanding territorial dispute over Arunachal Pradesh, with both sides periodically asserting their claims. China's renaming of locations in Arunachal Pradesh is seen as a means to bolster its territorial claim and challenge India's sovereignty in the region.

China's claims to Arunachal Pradesh are based on historical assertions of sovereignty, including references to past governance structures and cultural

ties. By renaming places in the region with Chinese names, Beijing aims to reinforce the narrative of historical control over the area. This tactic is part of a broader effort to reshape historical narratives in support of its territorial claims.

Arunachal Pradesh holds strategic significance due to its proximity to the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the de facto border between India and China. Control over this region provides geopolitical advantages, including access to natural resources, strategic military positioning, and influence over neighbouring states. China's renaming of locations in Arunachal Pradesh is thus intertwined with its broader geopolitical ambitions in the region.

Renaming places and sites is a symbolic way for China to assert control and influence over Arunachal Pradesh. By imposing Chinese names on these locations, Beijing seeks to shape perceptions and establish a sense of authority over the region, both domestically and internationally. This tactic is part of a broader strategy of psychological warfare aimed at undermining India's claims and reinforcing China's dominance.

According to Pratibha, China's release of the latest list of new names for locations in Arunachal Pradesh might be because Beijing felt that it needs to give a proportionate response to Modi's visit. "There are a variety of ways in which way they respond," she said. "This is one way. However, it does not change the fact that Arunachal Pradesh is Indian territory."

### **India Stands To Lose Strategic Leverage Against China As Exiled Tibetans Leave Settlements – OpEd**

01 April 2024, Saurabh Sen, [Eurasia Review](#)

Tibetans exiled in India are leaving their settlements in droves. Over time, these settlements had become platforms that nurtured Tibet's political aspirations while protecting the Tibetan identity. Since 2014, however, there has been a sharp reduction in the number of exiled Tibetans living in these settlements. Heightened security along Nepal-Tibet border made it almost impossible for Tibetans to come to India. Also, a large number of Tibetans in these settlements, especially the youth, moved away in search of work and better living. With India happy to maintain status quo, these settlements can become unviable, denying it a strategic leverage against China.

Home away from home

After the 14th Dalai Lama escaped from China in 1959 with 80,000 followers, India sheltered them in designated settlements. There were three categories: agriculture-based, handicraft/industry-based and scattered settlements. In order to set these up, India leased land to the Central Tibetan Administration

(CTA). Till about 2010, the number of Tibetans exiled in settlements boiled over, forcing them to scatter all over India.

During 2011 Indian Census — the last census conducted — 182,685 persons reported Tibetan as their mother tongue. The number included exiled Tibetans as well as those who were Indian citizens. This figure reflected a 114.22 percent increase compared to the previous decade. Indian media, quoting government officials, reported the number of Tibetan refugees to be around 150,000 during the same time. In the 2004-2014 decade, CTA received between 4000 and 5,000 Tibetans each year at Dharamsala. These were Tibetans coming for pilgrimage, for admission into monasteries, schools, meeting relatives; and of course, the major part of the traffic was to receive an audience from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

However, there was sharp reduction in the number of refugees in the next decade, more specifically, between 2011 and 2022 — a trend corroborated by CTA officials. According to data collected by the (CTA) in 2022, there were 72,000 Tibetan refugees living in India, either in 39 settlements or scattered all over the country. The number now exiled in India is less than the number that accompanied the Dalai Lama.

There are two reasons behind this: heightened security at the Nepal-China (Tibet) border has made it almost impossible for Tibetans to come to India. The flow has now shrunk to 100-200 annually. Massive halls constructed at Dharamsala to welcome refugees have been converted to training centres. Moreover, a large number of Tibetans, especially the youth, are deserting the settlements in search of work and better living. In addition to migrating to other parts of India, they are going abroad, USA being a favourite destination. According to CTA estimates, 15 years back, there were 5,000–7,000 Tibetans in America. But now the number is close to 15,000. Nearly 5,000 Tibetans live in New York city itself. Faced with this exodus, it has become a challenge to accurately estimate the number of exiled Tibetans in Indian settlements. "We could not even locate individuals or families living outside the settlements," said a senior official of the CTA Home Department.

Dwindling numbers make the settlements vulnerable to local pressures

The CTA South Division has 15,000 acre of prime land leased to it by the local state government of Karnataka, spread over five agricultural settlements. With Tibetans moving out, more and more of this land either remains uncultivated for years, or are being informally sub-leased to local operators for contractual farming.

There have been instances when real estate developers (propped up by politicians across all

parties) have tried to grab these unused land, prompting local administrators to step in and sort out the matter. CTA leadership has been counselling Tibetan refugee cultivators to respect the law of the land and not sub-lease settlement land. CTA is advocating a review of India's 2014 Rehabilitation Policy to ensure a pan-India rehabilitation SOP.

Settlements fight Chinese onslaught on Tibetan identity

In the past 60-plus years, these settlements not only enabled exiled Tibetans to pursue their political goals, but most importantly also helped them preserve their cultural, linguistic and religious identities, even as refugees imbibed India's diverse local culture. Unless Tibetans, more specifically the youth, do not to come and stay in India, their long term political goals may become impossible to achieve. Jigme Tsultrim, CTA's Chief Representative, South Division, explained: "If the Tibetan communities get fragmented in a foreign land, there is a risk of these fragments getting absorbed and lost. So we are encouraging the Tibetan youths in exile to think in terms of their longer interest in serving in the settlements."

Preservation of Tibetan identity has become a key weapon to fight China's state-sponsored Sinicization drive. Other than prohibitive and discriminatory fees and inadequate facilities in rural areas, Chinese authorities have shut down local schools in Tibet and forcibly taken away children to boarding schools located between 1,000 and 2,000 km away from their homes. In these schools, nearly 100,000 Tibetan children are being taught the official Chinese curriculum in Mandarin as well as the positive aspects of Chinese Communist Party and administration, in the process, eradicating Tibetan language, culture and heritage.

Tsultrim said CTA was fighting this Chinese onslaught by encouraging Tibetans exiles to return to Tibet so that they can tell people back home that Tibetans are no longer aspiring for complete independence from China, but to live within the framework of the People's Republic of China. Young and senior monks who study in different monasteries in Indian settlements are encouraged to go back and serve their respective monasteries in Tibet. In return, Tibetans would like the Chinese government to guarantee autonomy of Tibetan culture, language, religion and other rights so that their distinct identity is protected.

India's attitude on exiled Tibetans: no escalation

India's position over Tibetan settlements needs to be understood in the context of its bilateral relation with China as well as in the context of Asia's emerging geopolitical narrative (where India is gradually getting surrounded by hostile neighbours with pro-China tilt).

Maintaining status quo with settlements rather than leveraging Tibet — with US support — to provoke China appears to be India's strategy at the moment.

According to a member of India's National Security Advisory Board, India is not interested in provoking China before 2028 by stoking the Tibet issue. Nor is it prepared to surrender its strategic leverage against China which Tibet provides. The current thinking within India's security establishment is that by 2028 (prior to the 2029 parliamentary elections), it will be in a position to resist China in case of a full-blown war. Till that happens, India is happy to restrict its hostility against China to the level of low-level border skirmishes with Tibetan settlements left to grapple with their own issues locally.

### **China's Advancing Efforts to Influence the U.S. Election Raise Alarms**

01 April 2024, [NY Times](#)

Covert Chinese accounts are masquerading online as American supporters of former President Donald J. Trump, promoting conspiracy theories, stoking domestic divisions and attacking President Biden ahead of the election in November, according to researchers and government officials.

The accounts signal a potential tactical shift in how Beijing aims to influence American politics, with more of a willingness to target specific candidates and parties, including Mr. Biden.

In an echo of Russia's influence campaign before the 2016 election, China appears to be trying to harness partisan divisions to undermine the Biden administration's policies, despite recent efforts by the two countries to lower the temperature in their relations.

Some of the Chinese accounts impersonate fervent Trump fans, including one on X that purported to be "a father, husband and son" who was "MAGA all the way!!" The accounts mocked Mr. Biden's age and shared fake images of him in a prison jumpsuit, or claimed that Mr. Biden was a Satanist pedophile while promoting Mr. Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan.

"I've never seen anything along those lines at all before," said Elise Thomas, a senior analyst at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a nonprofit research organization that uncovered a small group of the fake accounts posing as Trump supporters.

Ms. Thomas and other researchers have linked the new activity to a long-running network of accounts connected with the Chinese government known as Spamouflage. Several of the accounts they detailed previously posted pro-Beijing content in Mandarin — only to resurface in recent months under the guise of real Americans writing in English.

In a separate project, the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a research organization in Washington, identified 170 inauthentic pages and accounts on Facebook that have also pushed anti-American messages, including pointed attacks on Mr. Biden.

The effort has more successfully attracted actual users' attention and become more difficult for researchers to identify than previous Chinese efforts to influence public opinion in the United States. Though researchers say the overall political tilt of the campaign remains unclear, it has raised the possibility that China's government is calculating that a second Trump presidency, despite his sometimes hostile statements against the country, might be preferable to a second Biden term.

China's activity has already raised alarms inside the American government.

In February, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence reported that China was expanding its influence campaigns to "sow doubts about U.S. leadership, undermine democracy and extend Beijing's influence." The report expressed concern that Beijing could use increasingly sophisticated methods to try to influence the American election "to sideline critics of China."

Liu Pengyu, the spokesman for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, said in a statement that the presidential election was "the domestic affair of the United States" and that "China is committed to the principle of noninterference."

Relations Between China and the U.S.

Yellen's Visit: Despite a warm welcome on Janet Yellen's second trip to China as Treasury secretary, it was evident that the level of trust between Washington and Beijing does not run deep.

Biden-Xi Call: President Biden spoke with Xi Jinping, China's leader, in a call that was aimed at addressing a variety of combative and cooperative issues, as the United States grapples with wars and other global crises.

Influencing the U.S. Election: Covert Chinese accounts are masquerading online as American supporters of Donald Trump, signaling a potential tactical shift in how Beijing aims to influence U.S. politics.

Mounting Space Threats: The United States and China are locked in a new race over a fundamental resource: time.

"Claims about China influencing U.S. presidential elections are completely fabricated," he added.

Ms. Thomas, who has studied China's information operations for years, said the new effort suggested a more subtle and sophisticated approach than previous campaigns. It was the first time, she said, that she had encountered Chinese accounts posing so persuasively as Trump-supporting Americans while managing to attract genuine engagement.

"The worry has always been, what if one day they wake up and are effective?" she said. "Potentially, this could be the beginning of them waking up and being effective."

Online disinformation experts are looking ahead to the months before the November election with growing anxiety.

Intelligence assessments show Russia using increasingly subtle influence tactics in the United States to spread its case for isolationism as its war against Ukraine continues. Mock news sites are targeting Americans with Russian propaganda.

Efforts to beat back false narratives and conspiracy theories — already a difficult task — must now also contend with waning moderation efforts at social media platforms, political pushback, fast-advancing artificial intelligence technology and broad information fatigue.

Until now, China's efforts to advance its ideology in the West struggled to gain traction, first as it pushed its official propaganda about the superiority of its culture and economy and later as it began denigrating democracy and stoking anti-American sentiment.

In the 2022 midterm elections, the cybersecurity firm Mandiant reported that Dragonbridge, an influence campaign linked to China, tried to discourage Americans from voting while highlighting U.S. political polarization. That campaign, which experimented with fake American personas posting content in the first person, was poorly executed and largely overlooked online, researchers said.

The recent campaigns connected to China have sought to exploit the divisions already apparent in American politics, joining the divisive debate over issues such as gay rights, immigration and crime mainly from a right-wing perspective.

In February, according to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a Chinese-linked account on X calling itself a Western name alongside a "MAGA 2024" reference shared a video from RT, the Russian television network controlled by the Kremlin, to claim that Mr. Biden and the Central Intelligence Agency had sent a neo-Nazi gangster to fight in Ukraine. (That narrative was debunked by the investigative group Bellingcat.)

The next day the post received an enormous boost when Alex Jones, the podcaster known for spreading false claims and conspiracy theories, shared it on the platform with his 2.2 million followers.

The account with the "MAGA 2024" reference had taken steps to appear authentic, describing itself as being run by a 43-year-old Trump supporter in Los Angeles. But it used a profile photo lifted from a Danish man's travel blog, the institute's report on the accounts said. Although the account opened 14 years ago, its first publicly visible post was last April. In that post, the account attempted, without evidence, to link

Mr. Biden to Jeffrey Epstein, the disgraced financier and registered sex offender.

At least four other similar accounts are also operating, Ms. Thomas said, all of them with ties to China. One account paid for a subscription on X, which offers perks like better promotion and a blue check mark that was, before Elon Musk bought the platform, a sign of verification conferred to users whose identities had been verified. Like the other accounts, it shared pro-Trump and anti-Biden claims, including the QAnon conspiracy theory and baseless election fraud accusations.

The posts included exhortations to “be strong ourselves, not smear China and create rumors,” awkward phrases like “how dare?” instead of “how dare you?” and signs that the user’s web browser had been set to Mandarin.

One of the accounts seemed to slip up in May when it responded to another post in Mandarin; another was posting primarily in Mandarin until last spring, when it briefly went silent before resurfacing with all-English content. The accounts denounced efforts by American lawmakers to ban the popular TikTok app, which is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance, as a form of “true authoritarianism” orchestrated by Israel and as a tool for Mr. Biden to undermine China.

The accounts sometimes amplified or repeated content from the Chinese influence campaign Spamouflage, which was first identified in 2019 and linked to an arm of the Ministry of Public Security. It once posted content almost exclusively in Chinese to attack the Communist Party’s critics and protesters in Hong Kong.

It has pivoted in recent years to focus on the United States, portraying the country as overwhelmed by chaos. By 2020, it was posting in English and criticizing American foreign policy, as well as domestic issues in the United States, including its response to Covid-19 and natural disasters, like the wildfires in Hawaii last year.

China, which has denied interfering in other countries’ internal affairs, now appears to be building a network of accounts across many platforms to put to use in November. “This is reminiscent of Russia’s style of operations, but the difference is more the intensity of this operation,” said Margot Fulde-Hardy, a former analyst at Viginum, the government agency in France that combats disinformation online.

In the past, many Spamouflage accounts followed one another, posted sloppily in several languages and simultaneously blitzed social media users with identical messages across multiple platforms.

The newer accounts are trickier to find because they are trying to build an organic following and appear to be controlled by humans rather than automated bots. One of the accounts on X also had linked profiles on

Instagram and Threads, creating an appearance of authenticity.

Meta, which owns Instagram and Threads, last year removed thousands of inauthentic accounts linked to Spamouflage on Facebook and others on Instagram. It called one network it had removed “the largest known cross-platform influence operation to date.” Hundreds of related accounts remained on other platforms, including TikTok, X, LiveJournal and Blogspot, Meta said.

The Foundation for Defense of Democracies documented a new coordinated group of Chinese accounts linked to a Facebook page with 3,000 followers called the War of Somethings. The report underscores the persistence of China’s efforts despite Meta’s repeated efforts to take down Spamouflage accounts.

“What we’re seeing,” said Max Lesser, a senior analyst with the foundation, “is the campaign just continues, undeterred.”

### **De-Risking’s Blind Spot: China’s Targeting of Global Civil Society**

01 April 2024, [The Diplomat](#)

“De-risking” has become the buzzword in China policy circles since G-7 leaders endorsed the concept in May of last year. The task of reevaluating the complicated global supply chain with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has catapulted to the top of elites’ minds from Washington to Brussels to Tokyo. However, this laser focus on vulnerabilities in the economic relationship with China ignores a critical blind spot: the vulnerability of democratic societies and their non-governmental sectors.

Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-affiliated entities have pierced – and in some cases, subsidized – civil society groups around the world. Universities, researchers, media outlets, overseas Chinese, and a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) grapple consistently with the impact of the PRC’s tactics of censorship, propaganda, transnational repression, and bribery.

Whereas governments can craft laws and regulatory processes enacting safeguards to de-risk their economies from China, civil society’s very existence in functioning democracies depends on government not regulating it. Without new civil society-led initiatives and better efforts by democratic governments to protect the space for non-governmental actors from the CCP’s pressure, policymakers will find these critical drivers of democratization neutered and, in some cases, working at cross-purposes. Any de-risking strategy toward China without a focus on protecting civil society will fall short.

Document No. 9's Decade-long, Global Ripple Effect on Civil Society

To better understand the CCP's vision for the role of civil society in democracies, one should simply look at what the CCP says it wants for it. One year after Xi Jinping's ascent to the post of general secretary in 2012, the CCP General Office issued secret Document No. 9 to all Party members. The edict comprehensively repudiated the legitimacy of civil society, media, and the market of ideas and organizations that might in any way "oppose the Party's theory or political line."

As just two examples of this repudiation, take media and the knowledge sector (universities, research institutions, and think tanks), both critical sources of freedom of expression and government accountability. Document No. 9 stated that "the media and publishing system must be subject to the Party's discipline," and "be infused with the spirit of the Party," in order to guard against "overseas media and reactionary publications."

China is now home to one of the world's most restrictive media environments and its most sophisticated system of censorship. Within the knowledge sector of universities and research institutions, the Party sees "ideology as an intense struggle" requiring Party members to "seize their leadership authority and dominance" in promulgating Xi Jinping Thought. The Party's decades-long campaign to bring universities and ideological elites under its control reached a milestone in January as university "Party cells" have now merged with presidents' offices in order to ensure that the CCP's ideology remains the dominant strand of thinking on Chinese college campuses.

A decade since Document No. 9's issuance and its establishment in 2017 of an autocratic overseas NGO law, that same ideology and approach within China has gone global. The ripple effects of the CCP's intensified crackdown on civil society at home are now reaching the shores of nations and non-governmental sectors eager to benefit from engagement with China.

In a June 2021 speech to the Politburo, Xi reaffirmed Document No. 9's application to the Chinese party-state's engagement in the world, pointing to the "system of internal and external propaganda" that should "build a media cluster with international influence." The Party's "struggle on the ideological battlefield" is part and parcel of its efforts to, in Xi's words, "expand the circle of international public opinion friends who know China and who are friendly with China."

The CCP's position that non-governmental entities – with some exceptions in the business realm – simply have little to no legitimacy holds enormous implications for independent civil society beyond China's borders.

Globally, Party-controlled radio, news, social media companies, and TV outlets have massively expanded into new global markets and have struck licensing, content-sharing, and advertising agreements to influence foreign narratives about China. Leveraging these arrangements, Chinese embassies have coordinated harassment and pressure campaigns against outlets that publish news or opinions disfavored by the Chinese government. Freedom House's deeply researched Beijing Global Media Influence report found these types of highly repressive tactics in 16 of the 30 countries they surveyed.

Even in the relatively open society of Brazil, a content partnership with the PRC's CCTV and a 24-hour cable news channel, Bandnews TV, led journalists to censor themselves on China-related topics and more positively framing China's engagement in Brazil and Latin America.

Within the knowledge sector of many democracies, China studies programs across Latin America, Africa, and Asia are propped up by China's Ministry of Education or other Party-affiliated entities. After the closure of many Confucius Institutes in Western societies, some simply re-branded themselves under a new Party-directed initiative. Even on foreign university campuses, the CCP's capacity to compel Chinese diaspora members and researchers have for many made "living outside of China feel like living inside of China." These subsidization and intimidation techniques create pervasive self-censorship, where what is not said by public intellectuals can far outnumber what is said about the PRC.

The CCP's ongoing pressure campaign against civil society goes well beyond university and media officials. Its global campaign of transnational repression against Chinese citizens who speak out is rooted in Document No. 9's labeling of "internal dissidents as anti-government forces." Its squashing of any Chinese political party not under the CCP umbrella has manifested globally in its rapid expansion of CCP-led political party exchanges with parties of all ideologies and its training on one-Party rule of African politicians and diplomats at a new facility in Tanzania. **Civil Society's Power and Independence**

As the world sees time and time again during natural disasters, non-government organizations are often the first to arrive on the scene. Governments can't (and shouldn't) do everything on their own. Civil society, on the other hand, can be fast, entrepreneurial, and responsive. Its suite of activists, protest movements, investigative journalists, academics, and opposition groups can prevent – and have prevented – autocratization when illiberal leaders or parties rise to power.

A strong non-governmental sector and the accountability and scrutiny of government decisions is

a competitive advantage for democracies. When left largely unregulated by the state, they remain that way. A media organization under pressure from or co-opted by a government or ruling party won't hold that government accountable. A university unable to elevate voices that dissent to the prevailing views of a government will simply choose not to elevate them – or at worse, silence them. Civil society's power is in its independence, providing it credibility in the public sphere and sensitivity to citizen needs and shifting public opinion.

Government support to civil society is best implemented by, first and foremost, protecting their space to operate. Free and independent media needs an enabling environment of laws and regulations to ensure media can thrive, journalists are protected, and news gathering rights are upheld. Universities and research institutions need measures to ensure their intellectual freedom, spaces to educate the public, and – if needed – funding unencumbered by control over their political views.

#### De-Risking Civil Society from CCP Pressure

In a healthy democracy, the autonomy that civil society enjoys from government regulation presents unique challenges in combating pressure on the non-governmental sector coming from outside a country's borders.

As with China's trade and economic ties, Chinese entities' engagement in nearly every country's society is inevitable. Decoupling Chinese media, universities, students, and NGOs from the world is not only untenable, but probably counter-productive toward other critical aims, like maintaining democratic freedoms of expression, association, and the press. The current U.S. debate over TikTok is a microcosm of the range of available policy options. Do you allow a CCP-influenced social media platform to operate openly in your free society? Or do you cut your society off from the platform entirely, including from all of the benign aspects of it? Or is there a middle ground that properly balances risk, values, and opportunity?

Civil society in democracies finds itself at a similar crossroads of options, and at a particularly vulnerable moment. The rate of China's engagement with the world over the past two decades has outpaced the ability of governments, civil society, and businesses to adapt and prove the resilience of their democratic models. These vulnerable societies need effective, democracy-affirming strategies to de-risk themselves from the PRC's malign, authoritarian impacts in their non-governmental spaces.

These strategies for resilience go above and beyond traditional mechanisms and roles used to beat back authoritarian drifts. They involve cross-sectoral collaboration within civil society and with government entities, assertive messaging and exposure campaigns

about these vulnerabilities, and intense competition with China's overseas investments in non-governmental sectors by funders, the business sector, and democracy support groups.

More than a decade ago, the CCP took direct aim at Chinese civil society, striking a near-fatal blow, after which it then began targeting civil society abroad. Civil society, government, and other stakeholders now face the urgent need to shield themselves and prove the resilience of their democratic societies to this authoritarian pressure.

### The CCP's Performing Arts Troupes in the U.S.

01 April 2024, [China Scope](#)

Chinascopes has obtained a list of shows by Chinese performing-arts troupes in the U.S. between 2011 and 2019. Despite being incomplete, the list accounts for nearly 600 shows on U.S. soil. Additional data show that Beijing has been sponsoring performing-arts tours in the U.S. with political focus dating back to at least 2004.

The Chinese government has devoted significant resources to enabling these touring troupes to perform abroad, and the focus in sponsoring these shows is obvious, with a heavy political emphasis. These performing tours do not merely represent civil or cultural exchange; they are part of a substantial game played out by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) on foreign soil, aiming to build soft power influence and eliminate space for alternative voices.

One example concerns the prestigious Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., which hosted performances by at least 68 Beijing-sponsored groups during the period from 2011 to 2019. Moreover, in the single month of October 2005, the Kennedy Center saw shows by 13 different Beijing-sponsored groups, some of which put on multiple performances. Shows during this month included the National Ballet of China, the China National Acrobatic Group, the Beijing People's Arts Theater and the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra.

Other examples include New York City, where 41 such troupes visited during the period from 2011 to 2019. California, which has a high concentration of Chinese diaspora and where the Chinese consulate is influential, saw 220 visits during the same period. During the period from 2004 to 2006, the San Francisco Bay area specifically saw at least 24 visits by Beijing-sponsored performance troupes.

Productions have included shows by professional as well as children's theater groups, martial arts demonstrations, film screenings, musical shows ranging from solo pianists to national-caliber orchestral groups, acrobatic and circus performances, professional dance troupes, ethnic performing arts groups, and more. Such touring paused between 2020

and 2022 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, resuming in 2023. While nations of the free world see arts exchanges as a means of building friendship, sharing inspiration, and promoting cultural understanding, Beijing's efforts clearly go beyond such noble objectives. The CCP has been employing art exchange as a weapon of influence in soft power competition. Through persistent, massive, inconspicuous-looking art exchange and touring theater operations, Beijing has aimed to gradually shape civil discourse and expand communist influence in the United States as well as in other countries across the globe.

#### The CCP's "Culture Going Abroad" Strategy

While such performances appear innocuous when considered independently, they paint a clear picture when viewed collectively: the CCP is sending performance troupes to penetrate live entertainment markets in U.S. and across the world.

This is not empty talk – the CCP has long used tools of culture, including the performing arts, as means of influence and propaganda. As Mao Zedong once said, "Culture not only reflects but can also guide political fighting and economic struggle." {1} It was in this vein that Mao launched the infamous Chinese Cultural Revolution, wielding such tools to take down his political rival Liu Shaoqi (the CCP's second-most prominent leader at the time).

When the CCP uses culture and the arts as tools of influence, it does so differently depending on whether its target audience is within China's borders or abroad. To achieve its goals domestically, the CCP develops "red songs" and "red arts," aiming to indoctrinate the mainland-Chinese audience. This means, for example, injecting lyrics that praise the "mother-party" into popular Chinese folk music, using imagery to depict the iron fist of the proletariat striking at capitalists, or using ballet performances to tell stories about landlords exploiting peasants so as to stir up public hatred against the landlord class as a whole. Meanwhile, when operating internationally, the CCP performs soft power infiltration by exporting communist art under the banner of Chinese Culture.

The CCP first introduced this concept of "Culture Going Abroad" (文化走出去) in the mid-1990s, and the idea was officially adopted as part of the CCP's core strategy at the Sixth Plenum of the 17th Party Congress on October 18, 2011. In detail, the adopted strategy consists of the following directives:

Develop multi-channel, multi-format, and multi-level cultural exchanges.

Innovate overseas propaganda methods and "enhance international discourse power."

Implement the "Culture Going Abroad" project.

Strengthen the development of overseas Chinese Cultural Centers and Confucius Institutes.

Establish mechanisms of cultural exchange.

Create a mechanism of cultural exchange for youth in other countries and set up Chinese culture international promotion awards and international-level cultural awards. {2}

Many CCP researchers have justified or praised this strategy of soft power competition, emphasizing how culture plays a subtle yet pivotal role in shaping thoughts and "is the highest form of conquest." {3} Beijing has implemented government policies and devoted tremendous efforts to making the "Culture Going Abroad" strategy a success. {4} {5} As a result, Chinese performing arts troupes, ranging from the Peking Opera to acrobatics groups, from national-level to small-time troupes, have frequented theaters in the U.S. as well as in other countries.

One example of praise for this strategy came from China News Service (CNS), the second-largest state news agency in China. CNS, which is under the purview of the CCP's United Front Department, published an article in July of 2023 saying that the Anhui Huangmei Drama Theater had traveled to the U.S. as well as nearly 20 other countries, calling the group "a leading 'Culture Going Abroad' performance troupe." The article also declared, "With the blessing of Anhui Province's 'Culture Going Abroad' strategy, Huangmei opera (one of China's five major opera genres) has not only appeared on the world stage but has also taken root in many countries and regions." {6}

#### Logistics, Coordination, and Recruitment

The CCP is not just focusing on the biggest cities and states in the U.S.; it has been targeting the entire country. During the period from 2011 through 2019, we have records of Chinese performance troupes visiting at least 44 U.S. states (including Washington, DC). Given what we know about the CCP's pattern of political maneuvering, and given that the data we've obtained are incomplete, we can extrapolate that Chinese troupes have likely visited all fifty states in the U.S., demonstrating an attempt at sub-state level cultural infiltration.

Beijing's strategy for scheduling performances in every corner of the U.S. has been as follows: the national-level and highest-caliber troupes are sent to large cities and top venues, while small-time troupes, e.g. provincial- or municipal-level groups and more entertainment-natured performances, are sent to smaller cities. For example, the Jiangxi Art Troupe, invited by the Chinese Consulate in Chicago, went to Ames, Iowa; Shaanxi Provincial Art Troupe went to Minneapolis, Minnesota; and the Acrobats of China troupe went to Butte, Montana.

Chinese Consulates and other diplomatic and soft-power outlets have played a role in promoting and facilitating performances by Chinese groups in the U.S.



For example, one of the first post-COVID Chinese performances in the U.S. was the dance drama “Mulan” by the China Arts and Entertainment Group (CAEG) at the Kennedy Center between September 29th and October 1st of 2023. The Chinese Embassy in the United States gave a high-profile endorsement to the show. The Embassy even co-hosted a debut-day reception with the CAEG, and the Chinese Ambassador delivered remarks. According to the Kennedy Center’s website, CAEG is dedicated to spreading Chinese performing arts worldwide and “since its inception in 2009, has presented works at venues across the globe, including Lincoln Center in New York; The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.; and performance venues in Australia, New Zealand, UK, Germany, Italy, and throughout Europe.” {7}

Beijing has also tried to recruit foreign performing arts venues to its cause, founding a “Silk Road International Theater Alliance” to rope in the world’s top-tier theaters. CCP news outlet People’s Daily recently reported that “in October 2016, under the guidance of the former Ministry of Culture, the Silk Road International Theatre Alliance was formed. As of today, the alliance has 155 member units from 45 countries and regions, including 83 overseas members and 72 domestic members. Since its establishment, the alliance has played an active role in information exchange, personnel exchanges, and collaboration in performance production among theatre members. It has fostered long-term, deepened cooperation in the field of performing arts with countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative.” {8}

#### Why Do These Performances Matter?

Some living in free nations may wonder: why should we care about Beijing’s “Culture Going Abroad” campaign?

These Beijing-sponsored shows are of concern because the CCP is not a “normal” government. It attaches political, diplomatic, and ideological strings to art exchanges. One well-known example is the now-infamous Confucius Institute Initiative. Twenty years ago, when China began establishing Confucius Institutes at schools throughout the world, how many foresaw that such a language exchange program would be used as a trojan horse for propaganda? Since inception, the Confucius Institutes have been used to “tell the China story,” suppress dissidents, isolate Taiwan and Tibet, and dictate to Western universities what they can and cannot say about China.

However innocent they may appear on the surface, these Beijing-sponsored cultural exchanges and performances betray a definite clandestine agenda:

1. The performances present the benevolence and beauty of the Chinese people and of Chinese culture, aiming to give the

impression that the CCP too is benevolent and that it poses no harm to the world.

2. The “red” propaganda embedded in these performances can subtly impact the Western audience, leading them to believe that the CCP has benefited the Chinese by bringing them a better life.
3. Through cultural exchange, the CCP connects with potentially influential politicians as well as the cultural elite at the federal, state, and local levels; these individuals are the primary targets of the CCP’s united front work.
4. Just as Beijing has engaged in worldwide dumping of “made-in-China” goods, lowering prices and driving out competition, the CCP aims to monopolize the world’s theaters. This means squeezing out any non-CCP voices – especially voices that have a different but true story to tell about the history of China or the CCP.

Of course, the individual performers comprising many such Chinese touring troupes may be unaware of the extent of the CCP’s ambitions. Nevertheless, the CCP is devoting significant resources to make such a grand infiltration effort possible. It has been covering costs, providing logistical and promotional support, and pulling strings to secure visas and performance venues as appropriate. Let us not forget that the CCP’s goal is to propagate its ideology to every corner of the globe, either surreptitiously or by force. It follows the doctrine of “unrestricted war,” actively working to permeate all aspects of society, both physical and abstract. The realms of information, culture, ideology, public opinion, and normative morality are all battlegrounds in its fight to consolidate power. The performances of the Chinese troupes can be downloaded here.

Endnotes:

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{2} Chinascope, “Communist China’s Cultural Invasion of the World — Part I,” April 15, 2019.

<http://chinascope.org/archives/18295>.

{3} Ibid.

{4} Chinascope, “Communist China’s Cultural Invasion of the World — Part II,” April 19, 2019.

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<https://www.kennedy-center.org/whats-on/explore-by-genre/dance/2023-2024/image-china-mulan/>.

{8} People's Daily, "Civilizational Exchanges and Mutual Learning Promote Chinese Culture to Better Reach the World," November 7, 2023.

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