

# TIBET DIGEST

NOVEMBER 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- November Tibet Digest

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China's tightening grip on Tibet continued in November with political, environmental, and cultural developments. TAR Chairman Yan Jinhai resigned, and Tibetans in Qinghai's Tsoshar Prefecture were relocated under the guise of landslide risks, amid allegations of mineral exploitation. Environmental concerns grew with the impact of large-scale dam projects and the accelerated tree line expansion due to global warming.

Tibetan religious sites, like Mount Putuo, have been commercialized, and Beijing's control over Tibetan Buddhism deepened with the Panchen Lama's tour. The 17th UN Forum on Minority Issues raised concerns over China's suppression of Tibetan education, while the Tibetan Artists Festival highlighted the role of art in preserving Tibetan identity. Meanwhile, Tibetan whistle-blower Tsongon Tsering was sentenced for exposing illegal sand mining, and journalist Dong Yuyu was imprisoned on espionage charges. International advocacy efforts continued, with a Berlin conference and events in India calling for greater awareness of Tibet's issues.

## CCP'S Tibet Policies

**Tibet Autonomous Region chairman reported to have resigned:** Yan Jinhai, chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), has stepped down, with Karma Tsedan appointed as acting chairman. Yan, an ethnic Tibetan from Qinghai, had previously served as mayor of Lhasa and held other senior roles before becoming TAR chairman in 2021. The resignation was formalized during the 13th meeting of TAR's Standing Committee and will be submitted to the 12th People's Congress for record.

**Eying their mountain mineral deposits, China is relocating hundreds of Tibetan families citing landslide dangers:** China is relocating Tibetan families in Qinghai's Tsoshar Prefecture, citing landslide hazards, though activists allege it is to exploit mineral deposits in the sacred Amnye Ratoe mountain. Affected families face inadequate subsidies and unsustainable options for relocation, leading to economic hardship. Some have already been moved into state-built housing, while others resisting are forcibly removed from their ancestral lands.

**Tibet Leads China in GDP Growth in 2024:** Tibet achieved the highest GDP growth in China for the first three quarters of 2024, with a 6.2% year-on-year increase. Per capita disposable income has also ranked first nationwide for eight consecutive years. Online retail, particularly in jewelry and women's clothing, was the key growth driver, supported by e-commerce platforms and rural initiatives. Livestreaming sales of agricultural products have further contributed to this economic success.

**Patriotic Mandarin speech competitions in Tibet seen as undermining of locals' mother tongue:**

Mandarin speech competitions in Tibet, framed as promoting patriotism, are criticized for eroding the Tibetan language and culture. These contests target all age groups and are held in schools, monasteries, and rural areas. Critics highlight increased restrictions on Tibetan language education since 2020, including the closure of private schools and promotion of Mandarin in boarding schools, aiming to reduce Tibetan children's connection to their cultural roots.

**Chinese repression against Tibetan and other diaspora communities in Japan: HRW:** Human Rights Watch (HRW) has reported that the Chinese government is targeting diaspora communities in Japan, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Inner Mongolians, to suppress politically sensitive activities such as promoting culture and raising awareness about human rights abuses. The tactics include pressuring individuals through family members in China, direct interactions at embassies, and digital surveillance. Fear of retaliation has forced some to withdraw from activism, aligning with global patterns of China's transnational repression documented by Freedom House. HRW has urged Japan to establish mechanisms for reporting such abuses, safeguard privacy, and collaborate internationally to hold China accountable.

## Buddhism

**China's Panchen Concludes Tibet Tour:** The Chinese-appointed 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaincain Norbu, concluded a five-month tour of Tibet, involving religious and social activities, including rituals for nearly 70,000 believers. Installed by China after the abduction of the Dalai Lama-recognized Panchen Lama, Norbu's role is tied to Beijing's political agenda as he resides in Beijing and serves on top Chinese advisory bodies.

**Sacred Buddhist Mountain Commercialized:** Mount Putuo, a sacred Buddhist site, has been transformed into a commercial tourist destination under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), undermining its spiritual heritage. The CCP's actions include historical revisionism, commodification of religious artifacts, and portraying itself as the global guardian of Buddhism while repressing religious practices domestically, especially Tibetan Buddhism.

**Tibetan Monastic Education Undermined:** In Sichuan province, China forcibly shut down the Lhamo Kirti Monastery school, transferring students to state-run institutions as part of an effort to assimilate Tibetans and promote loyalty to the CCP. The move is part of broader policies eroding Tibetan cultural and religious identity, targeting traditional education and autonomy.

**Crackdown on Tibetan Monastic Schools:** The Taksang Lhamo Monastic School in Ngaba has been forcibly closed under China's assimilation policies, with young monks relocated to state boarding schools. Resistance from monks has been met with detention and coercion. These closures reflect China's strategy to eradicate Tibetan culture under the guise of modernizing education.

**Chinese scholars highlight Ramayan's footprints in China buried in Buddhist texts:** Chinese scholars have revealed the influence of the *Ramayana* in China, particularly through Buddhist scriptures. At a symposium hosted by the Indian Embassy, experts like Dr. Jiang Jingkui of Tsinghua University discussed how elements of the *Ramayana* were absorbed into Chinese culture, notably through Buddhist texts. Characters such as Hanuman were transformed, with Sun Wukong, the Monkey King, emerging as a prominent figure in Chinese folklore. The *Ramayana* was first introduced into Han culture during the early Buddhist translations, but was not fully incorporated. However, it found greater resonance in Tibetan culture, where it influenced literature and society. Ambassador Pradeep Kumar Rawat emphasized that the *Ramayana* transcends boundaries, maintaining its core values while adapting to different cultures.

**China restricts young Tibetan monks in 'prison-like' schools:** Chinese authorities have been criticized for detaining young Tibetan monks in government-run boarding schools under harsh conditions. The students, aged 6-17, were forcibly removed from monasteries like Kirti Monastery and are restricted from leaving school grounds or contacting their parents. The schools teach exclusively in Mandarin and enforce China's "patriotic education" policies, which critics argue are designed to suppress Tibetan culture, religion, and language. Surveillance has intensified in regions like Ngaba and Dzoge, where authorities have cracked down on any communication with the outside world. Tibetans accuse Beijing of violating their human rights and eradicating their cultural identity through these measures.

## State of Ecology of the Tibetan Plateau

**Global warming accelerates upward expansion of the alpine tree line in the Himalayas:** A study from the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research (ITP), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), reveals that global warming is causing the Himalayan fir (*Abies spectabilis*) to expand to higher altitudes faster than the Himalayan birch (*Betula utilis*) in Nepal's Sagarmatha National Park and Annapurna Conservation Area. The research highlights the shifting dynamics between late-successional fir species and early-successional birch species, with firs showing a higher upslope shift rate. This trend may lead to accelerated species succession and changes in forest composition, offering important insights into future ecosystem dynamics in the region.

**China's dam projects in Tibet pose environmental and social risks:** A report by Tibet Watch and Turquoise Roof warns of the significant environmental and social impacts of China's large-scale hydropower projects in Tibet.

The construction of dams on the Machu (Yellow River) and Yarlung Tsangpo has already caused damage, including the displacement of Tibetan villages and destruction of monasteries. The report also highlights the risks of methane emissions due to thawing permafrost and environmental degradation from non-native fish farming. These projects also pose threats to downstream nations like Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, which depend on the affected rivers for agriculture and livelihoods.

**Regulations provide extra protection for glaciers:** New regulations aimed at protecting glaciers in Tibet's Xizang region have come into effect, emphasizing the importance of glacier preservation for both local and national ecological security. The regulations outline clear responsibilities for government departments and provide penalties for construction or resource extraction activities that threaten glaciers. This move is in response to concerns about the accelerating retreat of glaciers due to global warming, which impacts water resources and biodiversity. Tibet's glaciers, which cover nearly 23,800 square kilometers, are crucial for the region's ecological balance and the source of major rivers in Asia.

**China speaks of greater protection for Tibet's glaciers, citing their alarming retreat:** China has announced stricter legal protections for Tibet's glaciers, responding to alarming research on their rapid retreat due to climate change. While the new regulations mandate protection measures for glaciers, skepticism remains about their actual enforcement, as past violations of environmental laws have gone unchecked. The regulations focus on limiting infrastructure development and resource extraction in glacier-adjacent areas, with penalties for non-compliance. Tibet's glaciers, which play a vital role in regulating regional climate and maintaining biodiversity, are critical to the region's water security and have been retreating at an alarming rate, threatening ecosystems across Asia.

## Tibet in Exile

**Inaugural Tibetan Artists Festival honours artists and intellectuals:** The inaugural Tibetan Artists Festival brought together 30 exiled Tibetan artists to showcase their work. The event featured performances by notable artists and included a keynote by Tsering Yangzom Lama, who emphasized the role of art in expressing Tibetan identity and solidarity with other marginalized communities. The festival was dedicated to artists in Tibet facing oppression, highlighting the importance of art in the Tibetan freedom struggle.

**Critical Schooling Situation in Tibet Raised at 17th UN Forum on Minority Issues:** At the UN Forum on Minority Issues, the Tibetan situation was discussed, focusing on China's suppression of Tibetan education. Over 1 million Tibetan children are being forcibly enrolled in Mandarin-only boarding schools, while Tibetan culture and religious sites face destruction. The forum is considering actions to hold China accountable and ensure Tibetans can preserve their language and culture.

**Sikyong Visits Tibetan Institutions in Mundgod, Implores Residents to Uphold Tibetan Spiritual and Cultural Heritage:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Tibetan settlements in Mundgod, urging residents, especially students, to value their Tibetan heritage and contribute to preserving the environment. He emphasized the critical role of Tibet in global sustainability and highlighted the importance of Tibetan culture and traditions, particularly in monastic institutions, as a foundation for the community's future.

**Tibetan advocacy alliance lobbies Indian MPs with three appeals:** The Tibet Advocacy Alliance-India organized a week of lobbying in New Delhi, presenting three key appeals to Indian MPs: recognizing Tibet as an occupied nation, honoring the Dalai Lama, and advocating for the preservation of Tibetan culture and language. While some appeals faced challenges due to India's political stance on Tibet, there was broad support for honoring the Dalai Lama and addressing the issue of China's cultural destruction in Tibet. The initiative aimed to foster ongoing engagement with Indian parliamentarians on Tibet-related issues.

**G7 Nations Condemn China's Human Rights Record in Tibet, East Turkestan, and Hong Kong:** The G7 foreign ministers and the EU High Representative issued a collective statement expressing concerns over China's human rights violations in Tibet, East Turkestan, and Hong Kong. They criticized China's suppression of freedoms and civil liberties, including the sentencing of pro-democracy activists in Hong Kong, urging China to honor

international human rights commitments. The G7 reaffirmed its commitment to defending international law and promoting human rights worldwide.

**Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Continues Scotland Study Mission:** A Tibetan parliamentary delegation, led by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, continued their study mission in Scotland, engaging with various parliamentary committees and institutions. They gained insights into Scotland's public administration, equality and human rights initiatives, and youth empowerment through discussions with Scottish parliamentarians. The delegation also explored ways to raise awareness about the Tibetan issue within the Scottish legislative framework.

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering Attends Enthronement of the 105th Gaden Tri Rinpoche:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering attended the enthronement of Jetsun Lobsang Dorjee Pelsangpo as the 105th Gaden Tripa, the head of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism. The ceremony, held at Gaden Lachi, included traditional rituals and teachings on Tsongkhapa's lam-rim, with the Gelug school offering prayers for the new Gaden Tri Rinpoche's long life. The event marked an important moment for Tibetan Buddhist leadership in exile.

**Tibetan Youth Congress Launches Bike Rally to Raise Awareness for Tibet's Cause:** The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) initiated a motorcycle rally to raise awareness about Tibet's ongoing cultural genocide. The rally, covering 15,000 km across 22 states, aims to expose China's repression of Tibetan culture, language, and identity. The TYC team emphasized the importance of international pressure on China to halt its human rights violations and called for support in preserving Tibet's environment and cultural heritage.

**US Launches 5-Year Programme to Support Tibetan Communities in South Asia:** The US government launched a five-year program to strengthen the economic, social, and cultural resilience of Tibetan communities in South Asia. The initiative, led by USAID in partnership with the Tibet Fund and the CTA, focuses on promoting sustainable livelihoods, enhancing social resilience, and preserving Tibetan cultural heritage. It aims to empower Tibetan communities through job training, entrepreneurship support, and cultural preservation efforts.

**USAID Mission Director Visits Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile:** USAID Mission Director Steve Olive and his delegation visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on November 25, 2024. They were received by Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, who thanked the U.S. for its continuous support for Tibet, including adoption of bills and support for Tibetan welfare programs. The visit also addressed climate change impacts on the Tibetan Plateau and the need for greater representation at global climate forums. The Deputy Speaker emphasized the importance of expanding educational opportunities for Tibetans, particularly in U.S.-funded programs.

**Tibetan Symposium in Taipei on Building Common Ground:** A symposium in Taipei, "Snow Land Forum: 2024," took place on November 23-24, focusing on the impact of U.S. legislation on Tibet and Tibet's position in the shifting global political landscape. Key discussions included the U.S. support for Tibet, with a particular focus on the Middle Way Approach and the importance of recognizing Tibet's unique cultural identity. The event was attended by various international figures, and discussions highlighted the need for greater international solidarity and strategic outreach for Tibet.

**Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Concludes London Mission:** On November 22, 2024, Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and MPs Dawa Tsering and Ratsa Sonam Norbu concluded their four-day study mission in London. The delegation met with Tibet Support Group members and UK parliamentary leaders to revitalize the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet. They advocated for stronger international recognition and policy reforms, similar to the U.S. Resolve Tibet Act, to address human rights violations and misrepresentations of Tibet under Chinese rule.

**Tibetan Monk Helps Slum Children Through Education:** Lobsang Jamyang, a Tibetan monk, founded the Tong-Len Charitable Trust in 2004, which has transformed the lives of hundreds of slum children in Dharamshala. The trust provides education to children who were once beggars or ragpickers, helping them achieve successful careers as doctors, engineers, and journalists. Many former students now pursue higher studies and competitive exams. The trust recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, marking significant achievements in its mission to uplift disadvantaged children.

**Tibetan Sikyong's Visit to Portugal:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering's visit to Portugal in November 2024 marked a historic step in strengthening international political engagement with the Tibetan cause. He met with Members of Parliament from multiple political parties in Lisbon and urged European nations to reassess their China policies. The visit led to a draft parliamentary resolution supporting Tibetan self-determination, sparking backlash from the Chinese embassy in Portugal, which condemned the proposal as interference in China's internal affairs.

**Tibetan Oracle's Visit to WVSOM:** The Nechung Oracle, Kuten-la, visited the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) to deliver a message of faith. He spoke about the interconnectedness of people across lifetimes, emphasizing the importance of compassion and kindness in healing. The Oracle highlighted the need for balance between the body, mind, and spirit. During the event, he shared a prayer and offered personal blessings to the attendees.

**Tibetan Delegation Visits Westminster Amid UK-China Relations:** A delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPIE) visited London to meet with UK lawmakers. This visit occurred while UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer met with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The TPIE delegation, led by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, advocated for policies supporting Tibet, including urging the UK to adopt a stance similar to the U.S. Resolve Tibet Act, which recognizes Tibet's right to self-determination and counters China's position on Tibet.

**TCHRD Advocacy on Transnational Repression:** The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) conducted advocacy and capacity-building activities in Europe to counter China's transnational repression of Tibetans. The team briefed policymakers, human rights experts, and lawmakers in various countries, emphasizing the harassment faced by Tibetans. Workshops were held in multiple European countries to raise awareness and provide support for those affected by China's repression efforts.

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering's Address on Tibet's Struggle:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of Tibet's Central Tibetan Administration, addressed the Tibetan community in Barcelona. He praised the Dalai Lama's leadership in keeping the Tibetan cause alive internationally. Tsering emphasized the importance of global advocacy and the growing recognition of Tibet's plight, despite the challenges faced by the Tibetan people.

**Biden Mentions Tibet in Final Meeting with Xi Jinping:** In his final meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the APEC Summit in Lima, Peru, U.S. President Joe Biden publicly referenced Tibet while reflecting on their long-standing relationship. Biden recalled past discussions with Xi, including their time on the Tibetan plateau. During the meeting, they addressed issues such as military communication, artificial intelligence risks, and narcotics control. The conversation also covered China-U.S. relations, with Biden urging for stable relations and Xi expressing willingness to engage with the upcoming U.S. administration, despite political tensions.

**Parliamentary Delegation Visits Arunachal Pradesh:** A delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, consisting of Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten and Tenzin Jigdal, toured Arunachal Pradesh, visiting key Tibetan religious sites. They inspected the newly constructed 108 stupas at Mandala Point and the Thubten Do-Ngag Osel Dargye Ling Monastery, founded by Kyabje Drubwang Penor Rinpoche. The delegation also visited the Mon Dora Chenrezig Monastery, which provides education to local children. They praised the monastery's efforts to spread Tibetan religion, culture, and language, following the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

**Tibetan Delegation Calls for Stronger Support for Tibet at India-China Relations Conference:** At the 'Tibet Mukti Sadhana Aur Bharat-China Sambandh' conference in Patna, Tibetan parliamentary members Tenpa Yarpel and Lopon Thupten Gyaltzen called for greater support for Tibet. They emphasized Tibet's historical independence, its peaceful role as a buffer between India and China, and the cultural and spiritual ties between Tibet and India. Gyaltzen proposed awarding His Holiness the Dalai Lama India's highest civilian honor, Bharat Ratna, to recognize his global influence and promote Tibetan and Himalayan cultures.

**Uphold Dalai Lama's Values: Tibetan Minister:** Kalon, the Education Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), urged Tibetan students to uphold the Dalai Lama's values and focus on education, emphasizing the importance of preserving the Tibetan language. She called for a holistic approach to learning that includes contemplation and meditation, fostering compassion, particularly for students with special needs, to align with the Dalai Lama's teachings.



**Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Launches Book on Dalai Lama's Commitments:** A four-volume book on the Dalai Lama's four principal commitments was launched by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. The book, by researcher Kunchok Tenzin, delves into His Holiness's dedication to Tibet's welfare, cultural preservation, and democracy. The Speaker emphasized His Holiness's role in promoting non-violence, democracy, and Tibet's environment, highlighting the importance of collective efforts for a united Tibet.

**Tibetan Sikyong Testifies in Catalan Parliament:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering delivered a testimony before the Catalan Parliament's Commission of Foreign Affairs, discussing the current human rights situation in Tibet. He highlighted the 157 self-immolations by Tibetans protesting Chinese repression and advocated for autonomy under the Middle Way policy. He urged the commission to adopt resolutions similar to the U.S. position on the Dalai Lama's reincarnation and the illegal occupation of Tibet. Tsering also addressed the situation at Blanquerna University in Spain, speaking to students and faculty on human rights issues.

**Tibetan Parliament Delegation Completes Baltic States Advocacy Tour:** A Tibetan parliamentary delegation concluded its advocacy tour in the Baltic States (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) with a meeting in the Estonian Parliament, where they provided updates on the current situation in Tibet. The delegation received continued support for Tibet and met with students and political figures, including members of Estonia's Foreign Affairs Commission. The visit concluded with a dinner with parliamentarians, emphasizing the importance of international solidarity for Tibet's cause.

**Chinese Propaganda Tour in Europe:** In response to Tibetan diplomatic efforts, Chinese state-backed "Tibetologists" conducted a European tour to promote Beijing's narrative on Tibet. The delegation, organized by the Chinese State Council Information Office (SCIO), visited Latvia and Estonia, coinciding with visits by Tibetan parliamentarians. This tour aims to counter growing support for Tibet in the Baltic region, following Tibetan political leader Penpa Tsering's recent meeting with French President Macron. SCIO's global propaganda efforts continue to shape the narrative on Tibet, diverting attention from underlying political issues.

**Tibetan Women's Association Tour:** The Tibetan Women's Association initiated a tour from Dharamshala to Delhi, starting on Indian Children's Day and ending on World Children's Day. The tour aims to raise awareness of the plight of Tibetan children and Tibet's environmental issues. Tibetan children are forced to attend colonial boarding schools where they learn Mandarin instead of their native language. Additionally, Tibet's environment is facing severe challenges due to damming and illegal mining, impacting not only Tibet but also neighboring countries reliant on its rivers.

**Support for Marco Rubio's Nomination:** Tibetan and Uyghur activists have welcomed the nomination of Senator Marco Rubio as the next U.S. Secretary of State, given his history of critiquing China's human rights violations. Rubio, sanctioned by China in 2021 for his stance on issues like the Uyghur genocide, has been a strong advocate for Tibet. He co-sponsored key Tibet-related legislation, including the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act and the Tibet Policy and Support Act. Despite the optimism, Tibetan representatives remain cautious about the tangible impact of his appointment on Tibet.

**China's Propaganda Efforts in Europe to Counter Tibetan Outreach:** China has dispatched a team of "Tibetologists" to Latvia and Estonia to counter the growing Tibetan advocacy efforts in Europe. The Chinese team, organized by the State Council Information Office, spread propaganda about Tibet's development in various sectors. This visit coincided with the presence of Tibetan parliamentarians, who were engaged in diplomacy to garner support for Tibet. China's focus on external propaganda reflects its ongoing attempt to reshape the global narrative about Tibet and suppress discussions on Tibet's historical status and human rights issues.

**Education Kalon Highlights Tibetan Language Preservation on Children's Day:** On Children's Day, Kalon Tharlam Dolma Changra of the Tibetan Department of Education emphasized the importance of preserving the Tibetan language. She urged students to fully engage in the study and use of their language, highlighting its role in safeguarding Tibetan culture. She also encouraged a holistic approach to education that includes learning, contemplation, and meditation, and called for compassion and inclusivity for students with special needs.

**Red-House Indie Film Festival to Feature Tibet Documentary:** The Red-House Indie Film Festival will showcase the documentary *Un-titled*, directed by Syed Ahmad Rufai. The film, shot in McLeod Ganj, focuses on the displacement of Tibetans and their establishment of a government-in-exile in India. It highlights the Tibetan struggle for autonomy and their cultural resilience through poetry. The film is part of a broader effort to raise awareness about Tibet's geopolitical challenges and the Tibetan community's quest for autonomy.

**Tibetan Parliament Members Advocate for Tibet in Lithuania and Latvia:** A delegation of Tibetan parliamentarians visited Lithuania and Latvia to raise awareness about the repression of Tibetan culture and religion by China. During meetings with local lawmakers, they sought support for Tibet's struggle and discussed China's efforts to suppress Tibetan Buddhism. The visits come amid a broader diplomatic push by the Tibetan community to strengthen international support and ensure the preservation of Tibetan culture and religious freedoms.

**Tibet Information Office at Chinese Democracy Seminar:** The Tibet Information Office's Chinese Liaison Officer, Dawa Sangmo, participated in a two-day seminar hosted by the International Chinese Alliance for Democracy at the University of Sydney. The seminar, focused on Taiwan's democratic model and its potential influence on pro-democracy movements in mainland China, included speakers like Wang Dan, a prominent Tiananmen Square pro-democracy leader. Wang outlined strategies for strengthening the Chinese democratic movement, with particular admiration for the Tibetan government-in-exile. Dawa Sangmo discussed the importance of collaboration between Chinese democrats and Tibetans, highlighting Tibet's historical independence and advocating for the Middle Way Policy to foster peaceful coexistence.

**Asian Buddhist Summit 2024:** The International Buddhist Confederation hosted the First Asian Buddhist Summit in New Delhi, with over 700 attendees including Buddhist leaders and scholars. The summit, inaugurated by India's President, focused on Buddhism's role in promoting social harmony, ecological sustainability, and interfaith dialogue in Asia. Tenzin Lekshay from the Central Tibetan Administration discussed Tibetan Buddhism's spiritual significance and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings on peace. The event reinforced Buddhism's importance in strengthening cultural and socio-political ties in the region.

**China-linked Cyberattack on Tibetan Websites:** A China-linked hacker group, TAG-112, has targeted Tibetan media and university websites, including Tibet Post and Gyudmed Tantric University, as part of a cyber-espionage campaign aimed at collecting intelligence on the Tibetan community. The hackers exploited vulnerabilities in these websites to deploy the Cobalt Strike payload, a cybersecurity tool used by hackers for espionage. The Tibetan community in exile, alongside other ethnic minority groups, remains a frequent target for Chinese cyber-espionage operations, reflecting Beijing's view of them as subversive elements.

**10th Young Tibetan Researchers Conference:** The Tibet Policy Institute hosted the 10th Young Tibetan Researchers Conference at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Varanasi, gathering over thirty young researchers to present on diverse topics like Tibetan religion, history, anthropology, politics, and development. The conference aimed to increase exiled Tibetans' participation in international discussions about Tibet, countering China's efforts to dominate Tibetan studies with its interpretation of history. Key speakers emphasized the importance of studying Tibet's past, present, and future in academic contexts, with a focus on developing unified research methodologies and addressing China's use of the term "Xizang" for Tibet.

**Tibetan Delegates Highlight Derge Dam Concerns at COP29:** At COP29 in Baku, Tibetan delegates Dechen Palmo and Dhondup Wangmo raised concerns about the Derge Dam project, which threatens the Drichu River's ecological and cultural significance. They distributed a brochure to raise awareness about the risks the project poses to the river and downstream communities. The delegates aim to promote sustainable alternatives and garner international support to protect Tibet's environment and water resources.

**Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha Meets Dalai Lama, Invites Tibetan Delegates to Vesak Celebrations:** A Vietnamese Buddhist delegation led by Ven Thich Tam Tri visited the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala and invited him to send representatives to the Vesak festival in Vietnam in 2025. The delegation also discussed a long-term cooperation agreement between Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhism and sought permission to translate Tibetan Buddhist texts into Vietnamese.

**Sikyong Penpa Tsering Visits Tibetan Institutions in Kalimpong:** Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Tibetan institutions in Kalimpong, addressing local residents and students. He discussed Tibet's geopolitical challenges, the importance of its river systems, and the ongoing environmental threats. Sikyong also emphasized the Middle Way Approach as key to Tibet's survival and the need for global unity in advocating for Tibet's cultural and political rights.

**Tibetan MPs Meet Czech Lawmakers to Discuss Tibet's Struggles:** Tibetan MPs Youdon Aukatsang and Tsering Lhamo met Czech lawmakers to discuss Tibet's challenges under Chinese rule, including control over Tibetan schools and the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. They received strong support from Czech officials and discussed ongoing initiatives to protect Tibet's rights and cultural heritage. The visit also focused on promoting human rights and religious freedom on an international scale.

**Tibetan Environment Activist Highlights China's Large-Scale Timber Extraction:** Padma Wangyal, a Tibetan environmental activist, highlighted China's extensive timber extraction in Tibet, particularly in Dhartsedo, during his address at the Tibet Museum's "Rivers of the Sky" exhibition. Wangyal shared observations from his visits to Tibet, revealing the scale of deforestation and its impact on Tibet's environment. He also discussed his efforts, including a tree plantation project supported by the Dalai Lama's office, to combat environmental damage. Wangyal has been dedicated to environmental causes in Tibet and Nepal, despite being unable to return to Tibet since 2009.

**Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile Calls for UN Research on Damage Caused by China in Tibet:** The Tibetan parliament-in-exile has urged the United Nations to conduct scientific research on the environmental damage caused by China in Tibet, particularly its impact on the global climate. The call was made during the launch of the Tibet Museum's "Rivers of the Sky" exhibition. Tibetan environmentalists pointed out that deforestation in Tibet exacerbates climate change, affecting regional water supplies and agricultural cycles, with neighboring countries like India being directly impacted. The Tibetan parliament emphasized the urgency of addressing these issues globally.

**'Rivers of the Sky' Exhibition Highlights Mismanagement of Tibet's Vulnerable River System Ahead of COP29:** The Tibet Museum's exhibition "Rivers of the Sky" underscores the vulnerability of Tibet's river systems due to climate change, environmental degradation, and mismanagement of water resources. The exhibition draws attention to the melting glaciers and large-scale dam projects affecting the Tibetan Plateau, which is vital to the survival of millions. Tibetan environmentalist Padma Wangyal, who witnessed timber extraction in Tibet, spoke about his efforts to promote sustainability. The exhibition calls for immediate action to prevent further ecological damage, which could have devastating consequences for both Tibet and neighboring regions.

**Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang Meets Australia Tibet Council Delegation:** Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang met with a delegation from the Australia Tibet Council (ATC) during their "Little Tibet" tour. She expressed gratitude for ATC's long-standing support for Tibet and highlighted the importance of countering China's disinformation. Teykhang briefed the delegation on the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile's structure and emphasized Tibet's critical situation, including forced relocations of Tibetan children and self-immolations as acts of protest. The delegation was honored with traditional Tibetan gifts and given a tour of the Parliament.

**Tibetan Translation of "Eat the Buddha" Launched in Dharamshala:** The Tibetan translation of *Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town* by Barbara Demick was launched in Dharamshala. The book, originally published in 2020, chronicles the lives of Tibetans in Ngaba, focusing on self-immolations as a form of protest. Demick expressed appreciation for the translator, Depo Tso, and editor Atuk Kunchok, and highlighted the importance of making these stories accessible to a Tibetan audience. Depo Tso shared her personal connection to the book, recounting the loss of her sibling and reflecting on the Cultural Revolution's impact on her family.

**Tibetan MPs Discuss Tibet's Critical Situation with German MPs:** During a visit to Berlin, Tibetan MPs Youdon Aukatsang and Tsering Lhamo briefed German parliamentarians about the dire situation in Tibet, focusing on China's policies to erase Tibetan identity and culture. They called for a declaration endorsing His Holiness the Dalai Lama's authority over his reincarnation, particularly as part of his 90th birthday anniversary. The MPs encouraged German representatives to visit Dharamshala to show solidarity with Tibet.

**His Holiness the Dalai Lama Congratulates U.S. President-elect Donald Trump:** His Holiness the Dalai Lama congratulated Donald Trump on his U.S. Presidential election victory, expressing admiration for the U.S. as a champion of democracy. He emphasized the importance of U.S. leadership in promoting peace and stability amid global uncertainties. His Holiness acknowledged the ongoing support of the U.S. for Tibet's cultural preservation and wished President-elect Trump success in addressing both national and global challenges.

**Department of Education Unveils New Children's Books:** The Department of Education (DoE) of the Central Tibetan Administration released a series of children's books designed to enhance reading skills and intellectual growth among Tibetan children in India and Nepal. The books, which include both children's and educational books, are available for free download and aim to foster creativity and broader understanding among students. This initiative is supported by USAID and coordinated with The Tibet Fund.

**Arunachal: TSGAP Reiterates Support to Tibetan Cause:** The Tibet Support Group of Arunachal Pradesh (TSGAP), led by President Tarh Tarak and Secretary-General Nima Sange, expressed its continued support for the Tibetan freedom struggle during a meeting with Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). The group emphasized its commitment to the welfare of the Tibetan community in Arunachal Pradesh and plans to organize events to raise awareness about Tibetan issues. TSGAP advocates for the restoration of the historical barter trade between Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet through Tibet's freedom from China. Sikyong Penpa Tsering praised the group's efforts and announced plans for a visit to eastern Arunachal Pradesh in the coming year.

**DIIR Expresses Gratitude to 15 Countries for Statements on Human Rights Violations in Tibet at the UNGA:** The Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) expressed appreciation to 15 countries for their joint statement at the 79th UN General Assembly, which condemned human rights violations in Tibet and East Turkistan. Countries including the USA, Australia, Canada, and several European nations called attention to the ongoing violations in Tibet under China's rule. Kalon Norzin Dolma of DIIR thanked the nations for their stand on justice, human rights, and peace, acknowledging the challenges faced by Tibetans and the importance of international solidarity to address these issues.

**Deputy Speaker Meets FNVA Trustee and Tibetan Researchers:** On 4 November 2024, Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang met with FNVA Trustee Rebon Banerjee and three young Tibetan researchers to discuss promoting Tibet-related research and raising global awareness. She emphasized the importance of a unified Tibetan message and shared her experiences at an IPAC meeting. The researchers outlined their work, stressing the need for accurate research to address miscommunication and exploring potential collaborations between the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and FNVA. The meeting concluded with a tour of the parliament hall, where the Deputy Speaker explained its structure and functioning.

**Central Tibetan Administration Convenes Three-Day Communication Strategy Meeting:** The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) held a three-day communication strategy meeting in Dharamshala, focusing on improving the dissemination of news and public awareness. Kalon Norzin Dolma outlined the three key target audiences for CTA communications: the Chinese, the international community, and the Tibetan people. She emphasized the need to address these audiences effectively and discussed the challenges in CTA communications. The meeting, organized by the National Democratic Institute and funded by USAID, was attended by members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and other CTA officials.

**Pioneering Tibetan IT Outfit Unveils Five New Stages at Monlam Manifest 2024:** The Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center unveiled five new innovative tools at the Monlam Manifest 2024 event held at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA). These tools include Monlam AI, a suite of software designed to bridge technological gaps while preserving Tibetan culture. The Monlam Translate App, Web Extension, Nyamrub (Collaboration), Keyboard, and Melong (Tibetan Large Language Model) aim to make the Tibetan language more accessible in the digital space. Geshe Lobsang Monlam, founder of the center, emphasized that these tools would help the Tibetan language thrive globally while remaining rooted in Tibetan traditions. The event also highlighted the center's achievements, including the Monlam Grand Dictionary, which has been widely accessed by users worldwide.

## Protests, Detention and Other News from the PRC

**China sentences veteran journalist on espionage charges:** Dong Yuyu, a 62-year-old Chinese state media journalist, has been sentenced to seven years in prison on espionage charges, which his family and press freedom advocates argue are politically motivated. Dong, known for his liberal writings, was detained in February 2022 while dining with a Japanese diplomat. His trial was held in secret, with no press or family allowed to attend, and no evidence or testimony was made public. His family believes his long-standing independence as a journalist led to his persecution. Dong's case highlights China's increasing crackdown on independent voices.

**Tibetan whistle-blower sentenced to eight months for exposing illegal sand mining:** Tsongon Tsering, a Tibetan activist from Ngaba, has been sentenced to eight months in prison for exposing illegal sand mining operations in his village. In October 2024, he filmed and shared a video showing the destruction caused by mining activities, which was conducted under the guise of road construction. Despite his efforts to highlight the environmental damage and corruption, Tsering was arrested and placed in detention. His sentencing is seen as part of a broader crackdown on dissent and activism in Tibetan regions, with authorities continuing to target whistle-blowers and critics.

**Renowned Tibetan writer and intellectual released from Chinese prison but remains under strict surveillance:** Rongwo Gendun Lhundup, a respected Tibetan writer and educator, has been released from prison but remains under heavy surveillance. He had been sentenced to four years for "inciting separatism" after his works, including poems and essays, criticized Chinese policies. Despite his release, Rongwo is still subjected to strict monitoring, and his case highlights the ongoing repression of Tibetan intellectuals and activists. Rongwo's writings, which focus on Tibetan culture and identity, have made him a target of the Chinese authorities, and his freedom is still severely restricted.

**Two influential Tibetans released from Chinese prison:** Karma Samdup, a Tibetan environmentalist and philanthropist, and Gendun Lhundup, a prolific writer, have both been released from Chinese prisons. Karma was imprisoned for 15 years on charges of grave robbing, which are widely considered to be false, while Gendun was sentenced to four years for "inciting separatism." Both individuals have faced significant repression due to their activism, and their releases have sparked hopes for greater freedom for Tibetans under Chinese rule. However, like many others, they remain under constant surveillance, and their ability to speak out is severely restricted.

**Tashi Wangchuk Detained Again for "Slanderous" Videos on Chinese TikTok:** Tashi Wangchuk, a prominent Tibetan language rights activist, was detained on October 20, 2024, by Chinese authorities for posting "slanderous" videos on Chinese social media platforms like Douyin (TikTok) and Kuaishou. The Yushul City Public Security Bureau (PSB) accused him of disrupting social order and challenging government decisions. This followed his previous five-year prison sentence from 2016-2021 for advocating Tibetan language protection. Tashi refused to sign the detention notice, showing his defiance against the charges.

**Tibet, Sera Monastery Monk Persecuted to Death in Detention:** Losel, a monk from Sera Monastery, died in detention after being severely beaten by Chinese authorities. He was arrested in May 2024 on charges of sharing information about Tibet with foreigners. Despite enduring brutal interrogations and not receiving medical care, Losel's family was unaware of his condition until his body was returned to them on October 21, 2024. His death highlights ongoing repression of religious and political expression in Tibet.

**Chinese Official Sentenced to Life in Prison for Selling State Secrets:** A Chinese official, pseudonymized as Wang Moumou, was sentenced to life in prison after selling state secrets to a foreign intelligence agency. Wang, facing heavy debts from failed cryptocurrency investments, offered internal information in exchange for money. His actions, which included leaking top-secret national information, were discovered by the Ministry of State Security (MSS), leading to his life sentence.

**Jailed Tibetan Community Leader Denied Retrial:** Anya Sengdra, a Tibetan environmental activist, has been denied a retrial by Chinese authorities. He is serving a seven-year sentence for speaking out against corruption, illegal mining, and wildlife hunting in Tibet. Despite having already served six years, his appeal for a retrial was rejected by the Supreme People's Court in Xi'an, illustrating the ongoing suppression of dissent in Tibet.

**Cheng Peiming: Organ Harvesting Survivor Slandered in China and Threatened in the US:** Cheng Peiming, a Falun Gong practitioner and the first known survivor of China's forced organ harvesting, has shared his harrowing experience at public events in the U.S. Despite facing widespread propaganda and harassment, Cheng's testimony, corroborated by Australian medical experts, has gained traction. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has retaliated by slandering him in Chinese media, accusing him of fabricating his story. Cheng has also faced personal threats in the U.S., including break-ins and attempts to harm him and his vehicle. The case highlights the persistent censorship and efforts to suppress testimonies about human rights abuses in China.

**Heavy Jail Sentences Against Falun Gong Practitioners in Southern Mongolia:** Two Falun Gong practitioners, Sun Wentian and Guo Changsuo, were sentenced to lengthy prison terms in Yakeshi City, Inner Mongolia, for possessing Falun Gong literature. The trial was marred by irregularities, including the lack of evidence and serious mishandling of the defense. Despite appeals, the sentences were upheld, drawing attention to the harsh legal practices targeting individuals for their religious beliefs in China. This case underscores the frequent unjust imprisonment of practitioners and the routine human rights violations faced by religious minorities in the country.

**China said to intensify crackdown on Tibetan monks, religious education:** The Chinese government has escalated its repression of Tibetan Buddhism by forcibly relocating young monks from Kirti Monastery to state-run schools in Sichuan province. These students are subjected to harsh conditions, including confinement and Mandarin-only instruction, effectively severing their ties to Tibetan culture and language. Parents were coerced into signing agreements that sent their children to these "patriotic education" facilities, part of China's broader campaign to assimilate Tibetans and suppress their religious and cultural identity. This crackdown illustrates China's ongoing efforts to control Tibetan religious practices and education.

**Undisclosed Arrests of Four Tibetans Sweep Through Ngaba as Chinese Authorities Target Monks, Civilians:** In Ngaba, Tibet, the Chinese authorities have engaged in a covert operation targeting Tibetan monks and civilians, including Lobsang Samten and Lobsang Trinley from Kirti Monastery, along with civilians Tsering Tashi and Wangkyi. These arrests were conducted without public knowledge, and their whereabouts remain unknown. The Chinese government has imposed severe restrictions on religious institutions, forcing young monks into state-run boarding schools and mandating Mandarin instruction. The case highlights the ongoing suppression of Tibetan religious freedom and the lack of transparency regarding detentions in Tibet.

# CHINA'S TIBET POLICY

## Tibet Autonomous Region chairman reported to have resigned

29 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)



Yan Jinhai, an ethnic Tibetan with Chinese name from Qinghai province, has resigned as the Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) government. An acting chairman has been appointed, reported China's official *chinadaily.com.cn* Nov 29, citing the local party mouthpiece *Xizang Daily*.

China usually appoints a Tibetan as the chairman of the TAR government, with concurrent position as a Deputy Party secretary. The regional Party Secretary, who wields the real power, has always been an ethnic Chinese.

Karma Tsedan was appointed acting chairman of the Xizang autonomous region on Nov 28, the report said, using the Sincized name for Tibet.

The appointment was stated to have been made at the 13th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 12th People's Congress of the TAR.

The committee also accepted Yan Jinhai's request to resign from the region's chairman position, the report added.

The report said both decisions would be submitted for the record of the 12th People's Congress of the TAR.

Yan, 62, previously served as the Mayor of Lhasa City. Before that, he was vice governor of Qinghai from Jan 2013 to May 2017, when he became a member of the standing committee of the CPC Qinghai Provincial Committee, the province's top authority.

In Jul 2020, he was transferred to TAR and appointed a deputy party secretary, concurrently serving as party secretary of Lhasa since Jan 18, 2021.

On Oct 8, 2021, he was appointed chairman of TAR, succeeding Che Dalha, a Tibetan from Gyalthang (Chinese: Zhongdian, now renamed as Shangri-La) County, Yunnan province.

## Eying their mountain mineral deposits, China is relocating hundreds of Tibetan families citing landslide dangers

20 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)



China has ordered the relocation of hundreds of Tibetan families in Tsoshar (Chinese: Haidong) Prefecture-level City of Qinghai Province, citing landslide hazards. However, in reality, it is suspected to be planning to mine the overlooking mountain after years of exploring it for mineral deposits, said London-based Free Tibet campaign group ([freetibet.org](#)) Nov 19, citing its research partner Tibet Watch.

The group said that in late October this year, the Chinese government ordered the relocation of half the total households of Yarka and Bitsang villages in the City's Yadzi (Xunhua) County, located in the upper slopes and base of the sacred mountain Amnye Ratoe. While Yarka village, one of the 22 semi-nomadic villages in Karing Township, has around 200 households, Bitsang has over 100.

Ninety percent of the local residents are said to be farmers harvesting abundant agricultural produce, growing mainly grain crops such as wheat, barley, peas, as well as buckwheat and oilseed.

The local government is said to have given two options to the Tibetans ordered to relocate, both of which would impoverish them, with no sustainable means of livelihood. One is to accept a subsidy of 150,000 Chinese yuan per household for building a new home, and the other is to move into new homes built in the Yadzi County town.

While the subsidy is not sufficient to buy land and build a home, those moving into the government-built homes have no money for their sustenance.

The group cited sources as saying the Chinese government had been exploring the mountain for mineral deposits over the past several years. And it is not clear what deposits have been found.

Some households from Yarka village are said to have been already moved into the state-built houses in the Yadzi county-town. Others reluctant to leave are not being allowed to stay in their ancestral land, the group said.

## Tibet Leads China In GDP Growth In 2024

15 November 2024, [The Rising Nepal](#)

Last week, China's provinces released their economic performance data for the first three quarters of 2024. Preliminary calculations show that Tibet achieved a regional GDP of 250.5 billion yuan during this period. Calculated at comparable prices, Tibet's GDP grew by 6.2 per cent year-on-year, once again ranking first in the nation for economic growth.

Notably, the per capita disposable income of all residents in Tibet has ranked first in China for eight consecutive years, and the first three quarters of this year were no exception. This figure reached \$3,055, reflecting an 8.1 per cent increase year-on-year, 2.9 per cent above the national average. Specifically, urban residents in Tibet enjoyed a per capita disposable income of \$6,000, up 6.5 per cent and 2 per cent higher than the national average. Meanwhile, rural residents in Tibet saw a per capita disposable income of \$1,900, growing by 8.2 per cent, 1.6 per cent higher than the national average.

The main driver of this growth is Tibet's impressive performance in online retail. In the first three quarters of this year, Tibet's online retail sales reached \$2.297 billion, up 75.4 per cent year-on-year, the highest growth rate in the country. Online retail sales of physical goods alone reached \$1.93 billion, a 91.1 per cent increase, also ranking first nationwide. Jewellery tops the list of online purchases in Tibet, with growth in this category reaching 214.9 per cent in the first three quarters, far outpacing other categories. Most purchases were for everyday accessories, with diamonds making up the largest portion. Women's clothing and other apparel items also grew rapidly, becoming key drivers of growth in online physical goods sales.

This growth is closely linked to Tibet's unique cultural appeal and the maturation of its consumer market. As consumer aesthetics improve and spending habits shift, there is a greater demand for quality goods. Additionally, the rapid development of e-commerce platforms and continuous improvements in logistics have played a major role, with local e-commerce also expanding swiftly.

The significant growth of platforms such as Tmall and Douyin (China's TikTok) demonstrates that livestreaming has become a popular shopping method in Tibet. Rural e-commerce in Tibet is also flourishing. Data shows that rural network consumers in Tibet spend the most on diamonds, wellness teas, and women's clothing. Livestreaming e-commerce has also contributed to rapid growth in online sales of Tibetan agricultural products.

For example, at a recent celebration in Hangzhou marking the 30th anniversary of Zhejiang Province's support for Tibet, Zhejiang's internet influencers



hosted a livestream event to promote agricultural products from Naqu, Tibet. Five prominent internet personalities were appointed as “promotion ambassadors” to aid in Tibet’s rural support initiatives. They partnered with local Tibetan livestreamers to sell products like yak meat, yellow mushrooms, and dairy items. This event not only achieved high sales but also provided valuable sales skills to the Tibetan livestreamers.

Viewers on livestream platforms can now watch agricultural product sales broadcasts from Qiongdacun, a remote village in Dazi District, Lhasa. In this village, local resident Dawa Ciren quickly picks ripe tomatoes, stacking them in front of the greenhouse for sale. Tsering Choedron and several young college students manage the livestream sales, stacking tomatoes and other vegetables on a makeshift table of foam boxes.

With a tea table, a computer, and an upturned bucket as a stool, Tsering Choedron has created her own livestream setup. Her assistant, Tenzin Yangchen, helps by holding the phone, answering questions, and arranging products. Thanks to these efforts, they now sell over 2,000 orders of cherry tomatoes per day, totalling over 3,000 kilograms. She says that fast logistics has also been crucial to their success.

Meanwhile, other western regions of China with significant ethnic minority populations, such as Xinjiang, Guizhou, and Gansu, also achieved growth rates above 5 per cent. This growth is largely due to the Chinese government’s emphasis on social stability, ethnic unity, prioritisation of ecological protection, and commitment to high-quality development.

### **Patriotic Mandarin speech competitions in Tibet seen as undermining of locals’ mother tongue**

14 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)



As Chinese President Xi Jinping’s call for Sinicizing Tibet – and other ethnic minority areas of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) – continues to gather pace, Mandarin speech competitions are being held at schools and monasteries across the territory. These are combined with tests of the participants’ loyalty

and patriotism towards the communist party of China state.

Seen by analysts as another ploy by Beijing to erase Tibetan language and culture, Mandarin speech competitions are now frequently held in monasteries and schools across Tibet, reported the Tibetan service of *rfa.org* Nov 13, citing two local sources.

The report noted that though there are many dialects of Chinese spoken in the country, as well as many other languages, including Tibetan and Uyghur, Mandarin is the official language and Beijing wants all citizens to use it, with little or no attention paid to preserving the other languages.

“The reality is that young children are being strongly forced into learning Chinese, which is having a significant impact toward the eradication of Tibetan language and cultural practices,” the report cited the first source as saying.

On Nov 9 and 10, some 33 Tibetans competed in the National Common Language Speech Contest in Tibet’s capital Lhasa. The competition was stated to have been so framed to encourage participation from farming and nomadic communities as well as young Tibetans.

As if to emphasize the sweep of the language-Sinicization drive, the contestants were stated to have been divided into five groups: farmers and nomads, infants, school-age children, young adolescents, and adults.

In October, a similar competition was stated to have been held in the southern Tibetan city of Shigatse, with the theme of “Being a loyal and sincere patriot of the new era.”

In Nagchu (Chinese: Naqu) in northern Tibet, monks and nuns were reported to have been made to praise the Chinese Communist Party in Mandarin as a part of “national language” competitions.

The report said that since 2020, China had been imposing stricter restrictions on language rights in Tibet, resulting in the closure of private Tibetan schools and a heightened emphasis on Chinese-language education in the name of standardizing textbooks and instructional materials.

It added that in 2021, authorities also began forbidding Tibetan children from attending informal language classes or workshops during winter breaks. It was in that year, on Dec 28, that China’s Ministry of Education, the National Rural Revitalization Bureau and the National Language Commission issued a plan to promote Mandarin. The stated aim was that by 2025, Mandarin will be spoken and understood in 85% of the PRC and 80% of its rural areas.

This has seen China set up a region-wide network of boarding schools for Tibetan children where they are taught primarily in Mandarin. They are also subjected to political indoctrination while being separated from their parents and homes in a bid to reduce their

contact with their native Tibetan language and culture, the report cited activists as saying.

The report cited another Tibetan source as saying, speaking on condition of anonymity, that Tibetans residing in rural areas are now required to speak Mandarin and write in Chinese.

The report cited Chinese state media as saying the main objectives of these language competitions for Tibetans was to promote and encourage the use of the “national common language,” improve the language proficiency of the general population, and showcase the achievements of language work throughout the Tibet Autonomous Region.

### Chinese repression against Tibetan and other diaspora communities in Japan: HRW

09 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



Protesters rally in Tokyo to support the victims of a fire in Urumqi, the capital of East Turkistan occupied by China, November 30, 2022 (Photo/ Hiro Komae/AP)

Rights watchdog Human Rights Watch (HRW) has released a new report stating that Chinese authorities are targeting and intimidating people from countries occupied by China who are living in Japan and engaging in activities deemed politically sensitive by the Chinese government.

According to the report released in October, the Chinese government’s harassment of diaspora community, includes people from East Turkistan, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia living in Japan, appears aimed at deterring them from protesting against the Chinese government or participating in events that challenge Beijing’s policies.

HRW interviewed 25 people from Hong Kong, mainland China, East Turkistan, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia who are living in Japan. All of them had been involved in peaceful activities, such as raising awareness about human rights abuses in East Turkistan or promoting Tibetan and Inner Mongolian culture, which the Chinese Communist Party views as threatening.

Most of those interviewed said they had been contacted by Chinese police, who pressured them to

end their activities in Japan. Some reported receiving calls from authorities through their relatives back home, while others were approached at the Chinese embassy in Tokyo.

The report states that several Tibetans said they faced pressure from the Chinese government after engaging in activities to promote Tibetan culture in Japan. One Tibetan individual told HRW that when they went to the Chinese embassy in Tokyo to renew their passport, embassy officials told them they needed to return to Tibet to do so. The person said they rejected the embassy’s recommendation, fearing they would be detained or face punishment.

One person said they stopped participating in politically sensitive activities out of fear of retaliation, while another declined to be interviewed for the same reason. Several ethnic Uyghurs from East Turkistan said they were asked to share information about Japan’s Uyghur community. The report stated that Chinese authorities have violated the rights of Chinese nationals who return home, citing the case of a 23-year-old Hong Kong woman who was arrested upon returning to Hong Kong for pro-democracy comments she made while studying in Japan.

The report aligns with broader patterns documented by Freedom House, which in [2021](#) identified China as conducting the world’s most extensive campaign of transnational repression. The repression tactics span from direct renditions to digital threats and coercion by proxy, targeting political dissidents, human rights activists, and minority groups like Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Falun Gong practitioners globally.

According to Freedom House, the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) transnational repression is characterized by its expansive scope, technological sophistication, and deep reach into foreign jurisdictions. WeChat, a popular social media platform among Chinese users worldwide, has become a tool for Beijing to surveil and silence dissent, with reports of hacking and phishing attacks targeting diaspora members.

The report also highlighted China’s use of its geopolitical influence to co-opt host countries into aiding its repression efforts. Countries such as Nepal and Thailand have reportedly assisted Beijing in detaining or monitoring individuals critical of the Chinese government.

HRW in its report called on the Japanese government to establish a system for residents to report incidents of transnational repression by the Chinese government, with appropriate privacy protections and asylum/protection mechanisms. The group also suggested Tokyo to coordinate with other countries and the UN to hold China accountable for these abuses.

# BUDDHISM

## **China's Panchen has concluded 5-month Tibet tour**

27 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Gyaincain Norbu, the replacement 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama reincarnation appointed by China to occupy the seat of Tibet's second most prominent religious figure, has completed a five-month tour of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), according to China's official *Xinhua* news agency Nov 27. His tour this year has lasted one month less than last year's.

He was installed by China in 1995 after abducting and disappearing 6-year-old 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized and proclaimed by the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader.

Like the previous Panchen Lama, Gyaincain Norbu lives in Beijing, although the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse City, Tibet, is supposed to be his seat of authority.

The report said that during those five months, Gyaincain Norbu "performed regular duties, Buddhist rituals and social activities."

He was stated to have flown into Tibet's capital Lhasa from Qinghai on Jun 25.

From Jun 27 to Sep 9, he performed his duties as the president of the Xizang branch of the Buddhist Association of China, and carried out Buddhist rituals and social activities in the cities of Lhasa, Nagqu (Tibetan: Nagchu) and Nyingchi (Nyingtri), the report said, using China's Sinicized name for Tibet.

He was earlier reported as re-elected to this post in September.

The report continued that from Sep 11 to Nov 25, Gyaincain Norbu "carried out a series of Buddhist rituals and social activities in the city of Xigaze, and presided over a meeting of the council of the Xizang branch of the Buddhist Association of China."

During his five-month tour in TAR, Gyaincain Norbu "performed head-touching rituals for nearly 70,000 monks and believers," the report added.

As the "11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama" Gyaincain Norbu is also a member of the Standing Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the PRC's top political advisory body, and also a vice president of the Buddhist Association of China.

## **Sacred buddhist mountain in China transformed into commercialized tourist destination**

22 November 2024, [Daily Mirror](#)

Mount Putuo, one of Buddhism's four sacred mountains, has undergone a dramatic transformation under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), evolving from a revered spiritual sanctuary to a commercialized tourist attraction. Once a site of profound religious significance dating back to the Tang Dynasty, the island

now symbolizes the commodification of faith. With over 10 million tourists generating billions in revenue annually, religious activities are closely monitored by the Buddhist Association for China (BAC), the CCP's religious overseer. The peak of commercialization came in 2018 when the CCP sought to list the Mount Putuo Tourism Development Company on the stock market. The attempt was halted only after widespread Buddhist protests.



The once-sacred spaces now feature luxury spas, gift shops offering mass-produced religious souvenirs, and a pilgrimage route designed solely to maximize tourist numbers. The island's origin story has been rewritten to align with nationalist propaganda, positioning China as the rightful center of Buddhism. The pilgrimage routes, once a journey of spiritual significance, are now replaced by mass transportation options to accommodate the growing tourist traffic. Even religious items are sold as cheap trinkets, including "Guanyin cake," reducing the sacredness of Buddhist legends to a marketing ploy.

Even more concerning is the CCP's historical revisionism. The island's history has been altered to minimize its connections with Japan and present China as the true center of Buddhism. State media increasingly portrays Tibetan Buddhist practices as inferior to Chinese traditions. This strategy aims not only to strengthen Chinese influence but to undermine Tibetan cultural and religious identity by delegitimizing Tibetan Buddhism.

The commercialization of Mount Putuo has had a profound impact on authentic Buddhist practice. Monks and pilgrims now find themselves marginalized in a space dominated by tourists. Rising entry fees and the overwhelming commercialization hinder the contemplative spiritual practices that once defined the mountain. This transformation is not an isolated incident but part of a broader CCP strategy to control Buddhist discourse and use religious heritage as a geopolitical tool. Despite being an officially atheist state, China now claims to be the global guardian of Buddhism.

China's recent announcement to host the "6th Buddhist Council" is a clear example of historical appropriation, attempting to align itself as the global custodian of Buddhism despite its atheist stance.

Through strategic religious diplomacy, China strengthens ties with Buddhist-majority nations while whitewashing its human rights violations and undermining Tibetan Buddhism.

Through this religious diplomacy, China seeks to portray itself as the protector of Buddhism, using cultural soft power to expand its political influence across Asia. However, the reality at home is starkly different. While China projects an image of spiritual sophistication abroad, it continues to dismantle Buddhist institutions domestically. In Tibet and Xinjiang, the CCP has engaged in widespread religious repression, including the destruction of monasteries and the detention of religious figures, actions that directly contradict the image China seeks to project as Buddhism's protector.

Mount Putuo stands as a warning about the fate of religious heritage under authoritarian rule. The CCP's approach to this sacred site, disguised as cultural preservation, has stripped it of its spiritual essence. Once a sanctuary for pilgrims, it has become a stage for the Party's political agenda, driven by profit, power, and control. The manipulation of Mount Putuo and China's broader Buddhist diplomacy strategy illustrates how religious traditions can be reshaped for political gain. While this strategy may advance China's geopolitical interests, it also highlights the cynical ways in which the CCP manipulates religious heritage, claiming to preserve it while actively undermining its authentic expression.

### **China Moves Tibetan Buddhist Monastery Students To State Schools | Exclusive**

22 November 2024, [News18](#), Manoj Gupta

The Lhamo Kirti Monastery school was completely shut down as part of China's broader initiative to control the Tibetan education

The Chinese authorities recently transferred around 200 students from a Tibetan Buddhist monastery school in Sichuan province to state-administered residential schools, in what agencies have termed a sign of China's escalation on Tibetan Buddhism.

According to a note from top intelligence agencies, the Lhamo Kirti Monastery school was completely shut down as part of China's broader initiative to control Tibetan education. Four Tibetan youths were detained in Sichuan for resisting forced transfers from monastic schools to state-run schools. They then underwent political re-education before being compelled to enrol in a local government school.

"China aims to promote loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) through state-run education. Over 1 million Tibetan children have been placed in state-run schools promoting Mandarin and Chinese cultural values. China has intensified control over



Tibetan Buddhism through stricter restrictions, increased surveillance, and forced assimilation policies. China's actions aim to assimilate Tibetan identity and limit family contact," read the note.

Intelligence sources said, "China asserts control over the appointment of Tibetan religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. The launch of the Tibet International Communication Centre was to reshape international narratives."

"China has intensified control over Tibet, targeting religious, educational, and environmental spheres to take them away from their roots and a situation like that of the Uighurs is being created. Arrests are being carried out for contacting outsiders in these areas and they are threatened that they will be sent to rehabilitation centres in case of non-compliance," sources said.

In September, Chen Wenqing, the head of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission – the ruling Communist Party's top security body, visited the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and some of the 10 **Tibetan autonomous prefectures** across Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai and reviewed security. He called for a resolute crackdown against separatists.

He also asked the local officials to maintain stability and guard against independence activities, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

In July, the US passed the Resolve Tibet Act, which enhances its support for Tibet and promotes dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama toward a peaceful resolution of the dispute over the status and governance of the remote Himalayan region.

### Monastic schools in Ngaba targeted amid crackdown on Tibetan-language education

08 November 2024, [ICT](#)

In yet another assault on Tibetan language in eastern Tibet, Chinese authorities have forcibly removed younger monks from the Taktsang Lhamo Monastic School and pressed them into state-run schools over recent months.

China is implementing multiple laws and policies crafted over the years to forcibly convert Tibetans into so-called model Chinese citizens for the "Chinese nation." The sophisticated assimilation program is being rolled out gradually to avoid international condemnation and to support the untrue argument that Tibetan assimilation into Chinese culture is a natural process.

#### **Taktsang Lhamo Monastic School closed**

Taktsang Lhamo monastic school, located in Dzoge (Chinese: Ruǒ'ěrgài) County in Ngaba Prefecture, Sichuan, has been targeted by Chinese authorities for at least two decades. It was forcibly shut down multiple times in the past but reemerged each time as

the focus of Chinese political policies and priorities shifted. Under Xi Jinping's rule, the school's continued survival is in doubt.



Main entrance to Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery

The monastic school, with its enrollment of over 500 minor monks, had remained relatively undisturbed by Chinese authorities in recent years. This cautious approach by the authorities was largely due to firm resistance from monks in the past, which even manifested as self-immolation protests in April 2013. Chinese legal and regulatory framework requires minor monks to be unenrolled from monasteries and mandates that every minor undergo the state-imposed mandatory schooling. While these policies have been firmly implemented in many parts of Tibet over time, the Taktsang Lhamo monastic school was able to operate normally, despite routine restrictions, until recently.

#### **The Ngaba Plan**

The cautious approach seems to have changed after the Ngaba (Aba) Prefecture Education Development Conference that was held on July 8, 2024. The conference focused on "new goals and tasks for promoting the high-quality development of education in the prefecture". The conference was focused on implementing the Ngaba Prefecture's 14th Five-Year Plan for Basic Education, the Sichuan Provincial five year education plan and the National Ethnic Affairs Commission of China's (NEAC) dictum on strengthening the sense of community of the Chinese nation.

NEAC broadly dictates that the "sense of community of the Chinese nation" be instilled and "to comprehensively strengthen national unity and progress and national common language and writing education, actively and steadily promote the integration of schools, mixed classes and mixed accommodation for all ethnic groups". The Sichuan provincial "**14th Five-Year Plan**" **Education Development Plan** states education is a major national and party strategy and the party's education policy must be fully implemented for the overall development of the Party and country.

It further states that the CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's expositions on education should be fully implemented in all aspects of education development to serve the CCP's governance and for the

consolidation and development of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics.

Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastic School, which falls under the jurisdiction of Dzoge County in Ngaba Prefecture, Sichuan, is obligated to follow the provincial and national level policies of the Chinese administrative system. Prior to the closure of the school, 69 kindergarten schools had already been closed, 8 kindergartens had been merged and the categories of 33 kindergartens had been changed to fulfil “14th Five-Year Plan for Basic Education School Layout and Construction in Aba Prefecture” according to Ngaba Prefecture Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission in July 2024.

With all kindergartens effectively closed in the prefecture, the focus seems to have shifted to the monastic schools in Ngaba. In July, another popular school, Jigme Gyaltzen Nationalities Vocational School, established over three decades in neighboring Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai, was shut down in accordance with Qinghai provincial government and party instructions. Although not strictly a monastic school, Jigme Gyaltzen school had a unique blend of students from both the monastic and lay community.

#### **Assimilation campaign**

The consecutive closures of private Tibetan language and culture focused schools indicates that the Chinese authorities in Tibet have relied on a flexible approach to education policy; allowing local officials to adapt laws and policies to local conditions with the long-term goal of achieving complete sinification, in which Tibetan culture is eliminated. As a result, Chinese authorities invoke applicable laws to gradually and steadily meet the set goals at hand for uniformity in implementation under the label of universalization of education. Since Xi Jinping took over the General Secretary of the CCP in 2012, private Tibetan schools offering Tibetan language and culture education have been repeatedly targeted in implementation of state education policies in Tibet. Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastic School is the most recent target and most likely not the last.

Prior to Xi Jinping’s rise to the General Secretary of the CCP in 2012, the Central Committee of the Communist Party in May 1985 decided to change the education system. The Law of the People’s Republic of China on Compulsory Education and the Outline of China’s Education Reform and Development were promulgated in 1986 to implement the CCP central committee’s decision to universalize nine-year compulsory education. The compulsory education law was amended by the Standing Committee of China’s National People’s Congress in June 2006 making receiving the compulsory education an obligation in accordance with the law. The coercive education policy holds parents liable if they do not send their

children to state-controlled schools and are subjected to legal regulation. In essence parents do not have the choice to send their children to an educational institution of their choice, which an emphasis on the preservation of Tibetan culture and the inclination of the children.

While such education policy seems benign and fulfilling human rights obligations for the ethnic Chinese people, its implementation has had a different impact on the Tibetan people, especially given Tibet’s status as an occupied country. These coercive policies to “modernize education” and promote “national unity” have affected Tibetans’ traditional modes of learning and transmission of centuries-old knowledge, and most crucially denied parents and students the freedom to access culturally Tibetan education.

#### **Effects of the Plan**

For centuries, monasteries have served as critical centers of education for the Tibetan people, with children often beginning their monastic education as young as 5 or 6 years old, embarking on a lifelong journey of learning. Under the current environment of coercive implementation of education policies, parents who request to have their children stay in the monastery’s school are not only being denied but accused of brainwashing their children.

Students resisting transfer from their monastery schools to the government run boarding schools are detained, subjected to political education, captured and forced back into school, even if they are suicidal at the thought of returning to the “prison-like conditions” in the state boarding schools. For instance, four young monks from Taktsang Lhamo monastic school were detained on Oct 2. for “political re-education” after resisting transfer and then forcibly placed in a state boarding school after their release on Oct 6.

In a disturbing video from early September 2024, some men who are presumably government employees forcibly shove a young monk into a white car to enroll him in a state boarding school. The young monk was one of the 140 monastic students from Muge monastic school in Muge, Ngaba. In another disturbing incident, three young monks from the same Muge monastic school, who were forced into a state boarding school, attempted suicide by jumping into a river to escape from the school. They described the school as “prison-like,” noting corporal punishment and insufficient food as reasons for their desperate action.

#### **Will the school reemerge?**

Since 1986, Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery provided specialized cultural education classes to young monks before they began formal Buddhist studies. In 1993, the Taktsang Lhamo Tibetan Cultural School was established specifically for young monks, but it was forcibly closed in 2003 by Chinese authorities. Later,

the Taksang Lhamo Kirti Monastery established a Preliminary Buddhist Studies School, which was also forced to close.

Despite multiple restrictions placed on the monastery since the 2008 spring protests in Ngaba, the institution remained resilient, managing to keep the school open despite suffocating restrictions until July 2024. The monastic school demonstrated remarkable persistence, reemerging each time it was closed by Chinese authorities.

However, reemergence under the current political climate and coercive implementation of China's education policy has become increasingly difficult. The ongoing restrictions on educational institutions and state policies have created significant challenges for maintaining educational programs within the monastery with all the young monks forced into state run boarding schools to become Chinese.

### Chinese scholars highlight Ramayan's footprints in China buried in Buddhist texts

03 November 2024, [The New Indian Express](#)

*The Monkey King with human characteristics called Sun Wukong, has remained forages in the best-loved and most enduring Chinese literature and folklore.*

China has had footprints of the stories of Ramayana cloaked in Buddhist scriptures for centuries, scholars here have said, bringing to the fore perhaps for the first time, the influence of Hinduism in the country's checkered history.

At a symposium on 'Ramayana- A Timeless Guide' organised by the Indian Embassy on Saturday, a host of Chinese scholars associated with longstanding research on religious influences, made candid presentations tracing the historical routes through which Ramayana reached China and its influence on Chinese art and literature.

"As a classic intertwining the religious and the secular world, the influence of Ramayana has grown ever more significantly through cross-cultural transmission," Dr Jiang Jingkui, Professor and Dean of the Institute for International and Area Studies of Tsinghua University said.

"China, too, has absorbed elements of this epic, which not only left traces in Chinese (majority) Han culture but was also reinterpreted and given new meaning in Chinese Xizang (Tibetan) culture," he said.

China officially refers to Tibet as Xizang.

"This cultural migration and adaptation demonstrate the openness and flexibility of Ramayana as a classic and worldly text," Jiang said.

"The earliest content related to Ramayana in China was introduced into the Han cultural sphere, primarily through Buddhist scriptures," he said.

While it was not fully incorporated as a complete work into the Han cultural sphere, parts of the epic were incorporated into Buddhist scriptures, he said, citing Chinese translations of Buddhist scripts in which key figures such as Dasharatha and Hanuman were noted as Buddhist characters.

"A famous example is that Hanuman was transformed into a Monkey King who obeyed Buddhist teachings, blending into classic Buddhist moral narratives," Jiang said.

The Monkey King with human characteristics called Sun Wukong, has remained forages in the best-loved and most enduring Chinese literature and folklore.

In his presentation, Pro Liu Jian of the National Institute of International Strategies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said many Chinese scholars agree that Sun Wukong can be traced to Hanuman, though some scholars say he is a 'domestic product'.

"Chinese scholars generally agree that the image of Sun Wukong comes from that of Hanuman. Therefore, Sun Wukong is not a domestic product, but a character from India," he asserted.

Speaking on the topic 'Footsteps of Ram in China', Prof Qiu Yonghuai, Chief expert and Deputy Director of China Centre for South Asian Studies of Sichuan University, in her presentation displayed photos of a wide variety of different Hindu deities in the museum Quanzhou, in China's Fujian province.

She even showed a photo of a Buddhist temple managed by a Hindu priest.

"It was primarily through Buddhism that Indian culture took its stronghold in China. This is the reason why in the history of Sino-Indian cultural relations, Hinduism occupies a negligible position," she said.

"Multifaceted Indian culture -- both Buddhist and non-Buddhist -- made its mark on Chinese soil," she added. Jiang, in his speech also recalled how the famous seventh-century Chinese scholar Xuanzang who visited India, studied at Nalanda University and brought back a host of Buddhist scriptures providing detailed accounts of Ramayana stories he heard during his pilgrimage.

"However, due to the Hindu background of Ramayana and the predominance of Buddhism in China, the text was neither fully translated nor widely circulated within Han culture," he said.

The first Chinese translation of Ramayana from Sanskrit was done by Ji Xianlin in 1980.

"Ji's translation was a significant breakthrough for Chinese academia, providing Chinese readers with access to an Indian literary classic and establishing a new bridge for Sino-Indian cultural exchange," Jiang said.

"Ji dedicated nearly a decade to translating this vast work of twenty-four thousand verses, and his version

has become a cornerstone for the study of Ramayana in China," he said.

Jiang added that Ramayana has a more extensive and longstanding history of influence in Tibet, where it was first introduced during the period of the Tubo Kingdom.

Through literary works and theatrical performances, Ramayana has not only become a subject of in-depth study among Tibetan scholars but has also gained widespread popularity among common people in Tibet.

This demonstrates the powerful vitality of Ramayana as a cross-cultural classic, he said Ramayana is not only an epic but also a profound exposition of the ideal personality and ideal society.

"Through the actions and words of Rama, as well as the establishment of the 'Ram Rajya', the epic presents multiple dimensions of the concept of 'Adarsh' (ideal) in Indian culture," he said.

In his address, Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat said Ramayana is believed to be the oldest poetic work of human civilisation.

"While the historians have not come to a definite conclusion about the time period when the Ramayana was written, there is astronomy-based research finding that date Ramayana to about 7th Century B.C.," he said.

"The Ramayana has also transcended geographical boundaries, adapting itself to seamlessly merging into local cultural tapestry, while maintaining its core values," he added.

Several Chinese professors, including Yin-Xi-nan of Sichuan University, and Xue Yuyun of Gansu National University for Nationalities made presentations on the impact of Ramayana in China over the ages.

Ambassador of Thailand to China, Chatchai Viriyavejakul and Perulian George Andreas Silalahi, Deputy Ambassador of Indonesia, spoke of the impact of Ramayana in their countries.

### China restricts young Tibetan monks in 'prison-like' schools

01 November 2024, [UCA News](#)

They are not permitted to leave the school grounds or meet their parents



Young monks having a walk after classes at the Tibet

*Autonomous Region Buddhist College on May 31, 2021. (Photo: AFP)*

Tibetans have accused the pro-Beijing authorities in the region of housing hundreds of young Tibetan Buddhist monks in prison-like conditions at government-run boarding schools, says a report.

The students forcibly transferred from the Kirti Monastery schools in Sichuan province's Ngaba county are not even permitted to leave the school grounds or meet their parents, *Radio Free Asia* (RFA) reported on Oct. 31.

"Since being forcibly removed from the monastery, the students have been denied contact with their parents and receive inadequate medical care when ill," RFA reported, citing an unnamed source.

"When parents request to meet their children, they are given various excuses about needing higher-level approval and ultimately face threats of imprisonment if they persist," the unnamed source added.

The students between the ages of 6-17 are taught exclusively in Mandarin, RFA reported.

Some of the students who attempted to escape the school were apprehended and are now being treated "like criminals" and forbidden from leaving the school grounds.

Over 1,000 young Tibetan monks were transferred from the Kirti Monastery to state-administered "colonial style" boarding schools in July.

The authorities closed another school at Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge county, affecting some 600 students.

The authorities had compelled parents to sign agreements ensuring that their children would be enrolled in government-run schools, where they would undergo state-approved "patriotic education." Pro-Beijing authorities in Tibet cite China's regulations on religious affairs which mandate that the students at monastic schools must be 18 or older, display patriotism, and be compliant with national laws.

Tibetan critics of China's communist-led government allege that these regulations are part of a broader policy to eradicate the use of the Tibetan language, suppress Tibetan culture, and enforce "patriotic education."

China's patriotic education policy mandates that the love of China and the ruling Chinese Communist Party be incorporated into work and study for all citizens.

The Chinese authorities in the region have also intensified surveillance and restrictions on Tibetans in Ngaba county following the school closures.

A high-ranking official from China's United Front Work Department is permanently stationed in Ngaba for several months, overseeing control measures over both the monastery and the local community.



The authorities have also unleashed a crackdown on any form of communication with the outside world, RFA reported.

In October, the authorities in Dzoge seized the phones of monks and teachers of Lhamo Kirti Monastery, accusing them of sharing the news of school closures.

In September, the authorities arrested four Tibetans, including two monks from Kirti Monastery, as well as two laypersons in Ngaba, accusing them of contacting Tibetans outside the region.

The Chinese government has claimed that the communication between Tibetans and their family members and friends abroad undermines national unity as a reason for communication restrictions, RFA reported.

Tibetans have denounced [Beijing's](#) surveillance, accusing the authorities of violating their human rights and trying to eradicate their religious, linguistic, and cultural identity.

# STATE OF ECOLOGY OF THE TIBETAN PLATEAU

## Global warming accelerates upward expansion of the alpine tree line in the Himalayas: study

19 November 2024, [Global Times](#), Leng Shumei

A latest study by researchers from Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research (ITP), Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), indicates that, against the backdrop of warming climate over the last 200 years, *Abies spectabilis* (Himalayan fir) in the mixed forests of Nepal's Sagarmatha National Park and Annapurna Conservation Area is expanding to higher altitudes at a faster rate compared to *Betula utilis* (Himalayan birch) in the same area. The findings point to accelerating successional dynamics with late-successional species rapidly outcompeting pioneer species, offering insight into future forest succession and its influences on ecosystem services.

The study was conducted by a team led by researcher Liang Eryuan from the State Key Laboratory of Tibetan Plateau Earth System, Environment and Resources, ITP, CAS. It was published online in *Nature Plants* on Monday, the Global Times learned from the ITP. Understanding how climate change influences succession is fundamental to predicting future forest composition. Global warming is expected to accelerate species succession at their cold thermal ranges, such as alpine tree lines. In the study, the team examined how interactions and successional strategies of the early-successional birch and the late-successional fir affected tree line dynamics by combining plot data with an individual-based tree line model at tree lines in the central Himalayas, read the study. The team found that firs showed increasing recruitment and a higher upslope shift rate ( $1.1 \pm 0.2$  meter per decade) compared with birch ( $0.6 \pm 0.3$  meter per decade) over the last 200 years. Spatial analyses indicate strong interspecies competition when trees were young. Model outputs from various climatic scenarios indicate that firs will probably accelerate their upslope movement with global warming, while birch recruitment will decline drastically, forming stable or even retreating tree lines, according to the study.

Shalik Ram Sigdel, the first author of the study and associate researcher at the ITP, told the Global Times that the alpine tree line, the uppermost limit of continuous distribution of upright trees, is strongly constrained by environmental factors such as low temperatures, making it highly sensitive to global warming. It serves as an ecological transition zone for studying species succession.

Vegetation succession refers to the recovery process of plant communities after disturbances over a long-time scale or the formation and development process on bare ground. Succession theory is one of the core research topics in vegetation ecology, forming the basis for predicting vegetation dynamics under

different future climate scenarios and guiding the restoration of degraded ecosystems, according to Sigdel.

Fossil records confirm that birch has been distributed in the Himalayan region for 2.5 million to 5 million years. Dendrochronological analysis indicates that in high-altitude forests composed of a single tree species, the maximum age of birch can exceed 450 years. As a pioneer species following glacial retreat, the succession process of birch should belong to the long-term succession type. However, it remains unclear whether climate warming will accelerate this succession process.

Since 2010, the research team has discovered mixed forests where birch and firs coexist at the tree line in Nepal's Sagarmatha National Park and Annapurna Conservation Area, providing a natural experimental platform for studying forest community succession under warming conditions.

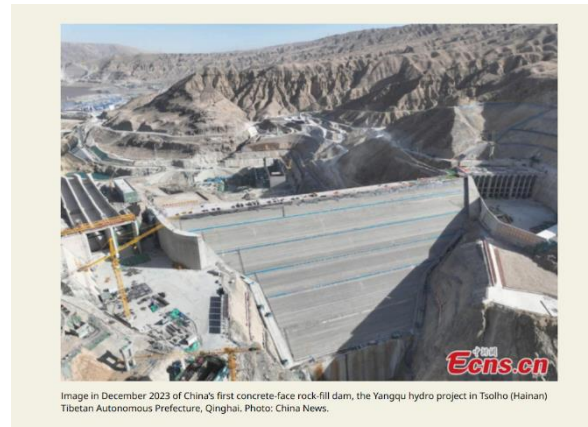
"Birch is sensitive to moisture, and the water stress caused by warming limits its growth and regeneration. In contrast, firs are sensitive to temperature, and warming within a certain threshold range is beneficial for their growth and regeneration. Therefore, against the backdrop of climate warming, firs demonstrate greater competitiveness than birch," said Liang Eryuan, the corresponding author of the study. Liang emphasized that climate change is significantly accelerating the species succession process at the alpine tree line in the Himalayas.

Through tree line model simulations, the research team further found that with ongoing warming, the ascent of firs will continue to accelerate, while the decline in birch regeneration will lead to a decrease in population density, further restricting the tree line ascent. In high-emission scenarios, there may even be a retreat of the birch tree line, indicating that under warming conditions, firs may rapidly replace birch as the pioneer species, accelerating the succession process. This finding has important implications for the prediction of future forest composition, structure, and ecosystem functions.

### China's dam projects in Tibet pose environmental and social risks, new report reveals

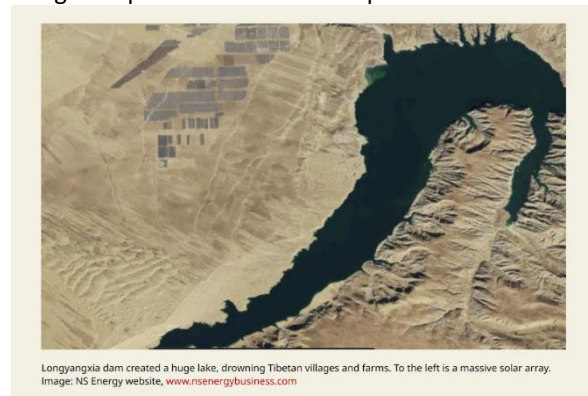
17 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundop

The report, titled "The Risks of China's Dangerous Dam-Building in Tibet: The Impacts of China's Move Upstream on the Machu/Yellow River", details extensive damage already caused by infrastructure projects on the Machu (Yellow River) and the Yarlung Tsangpo. It highlights potential severe consequences for local communities and downstream nations.



A joint report by *Tibet Watch* and *Turquoise Roof* has revealed concerning details about China's large-scale hydropower projects in Tibet, ignoring warnings from its own scientists about severe seismic and environmental risks.

One significant issue noted is construction on permafrost zones of the Tibetan Plateau, a region second only to the Arctic in permafrost coverage. The thawing permafrost, worsened by heavy infrastructure, releases methane—a potent greenhouse gas—into the atmosphere, with no mitigation policies from China in place.



The report provides new evidence of the displacement of entire Tibetan villages and the destruction of ancient monasteries to make way for dam projects. One notable example is the Yangkhil (Yangqu) hydropower station, where local Tibetans were forced to dismantle their own homes. An important monastery, previously designated as a protected heritage site, was removed from the list by Chinese authorities before being demolished. These actions have led to widespread social upheaval, disrupting the cultural and spiritual lives of Tibetan communities. China has started large-scale fish farming in reservoirs created by the dams. Non-native rainbow trout, marketed as salmon, are bred in huge numbers for Chinese consumers. This practice, already criticized in China, threatens local ecosystems and risks the spread of invasive species, as noted by Chinese scientists.



Before demolition began, an aerial view of Atsok Monastery, a 19th century Buddhist monastery located at a bend of Machu river in the Amdo region of the Tibetan plateau. Photo obtained in April 2022, from Tibet Watch

The report also disputes China's claims of a green energy transition, showing that many solar and hydropower projects are tied to coal-fired power plants. This reliance on coal undermines the narrative of a shift towards renewable energy, revealing a slower transition than China claims.

China's dam projects in Tibet also affect downstream nations. The report highlights risks for millions depending on the Yangtze, Mekong, and Yellow Rivers across Southeast Asia. Farmers and fisherfolk in Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand could face disruptions due to changes in water flow and less sediment, which is crucial for agriculture. The report calls for international intervention, urging action to protect both Tibetan communities and millions reliant on these crucial river systems.

### Regulations provide extra protection for glaciers

11 November 2024, [China Daily](#), Palden Nyima and Daqiong

The glaciers of the Xizang autonomous region will receive better legal protection with the implementation of regulations that came into effect on Oct 1.

This legislation marks a crucial step toward preserving the rich glacier resources of Xizang, one of China's most glacier-abundant regions.

The Xizang Development and Reform Commission highlighted the necessity of these regulations, adding that the protection of glaciers is not only vital for Xizang but also holds significance for the ecological security of the entire Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the nation.

According to Sodron, director of XDRC's department of resource conservation and environmental protection, existing policies and regulations concerning glacier protection were deemed inadequate, lacking effective oversight and management mechanisms.

"The formulation of the Xizang Autonomous Region Glacier Protection Regulations is a targeted response to address these shortcomings and provides clear and comprehensive guidelines for glacier protection efforts in Xizang," she said.

The regulations delineate specific responsibilities for departments, protection planning strategies, rights confirmation through investigation, classification of management frameworks, safeguard measures, ecological environment protection protocols, disaster response strategies and monitoring mechanisms.

Key provisions stipulate that governments at or above county level must integrate glacier protection initiatives into economic and social development plans, while township authorities are mandated to oversee glacier protection within their jurisdictions.

The regulations categorize glaciers into those within natural reserves, national parks, nature reserves, ecological protection red lines and areas outside designated regions. Specific directives outline tailored protection measures.

The regulations impose penalties on construction units or permit holders engaging in activities such as infrastructure development or resource extraction in glacier-adjacent areas without proper mitigation measures. Violators face fines ranging from 20,000 yuan (\$2,800) to 100,000 yuan, underscoring the stringent enforcement embedded mechanisms within the legislation.

In recent months, research from scientific institutions such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Northwest Institute of Eco-Environment and Resources and the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research has underscored the alarming rate of glacier retreat, attributing it to the escalating impacts of global climate change. These revelations further emphasize the urgency of robust glacier protection measures.

He Xiaobo, head of the Tangula Mountains Cryosphere and Environment Observation and Research Station of Xizang, said that the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, known as the "Roof of the World", plays an irreplaceable role in ecological security.

"Glaciers, as crucial components of the plateau's ecosystem, serve not only as the source of many major rivers in Asia but also play a vital role in regulating regional climate and maintaining biodiversity," he said. Based on the Second Chinese Glacier Inventory, China has 48,571 glaciers, with approximately 82 percent in a state of retreat, He said, adding that this poses challenges to water resource management and the health of ecosystems in the country. There are more than 21,800 glaciers in Xizang, representing 45 percent of glaciers distributed in China. They cover nearly 23,800 square kilometers, He added.

### China speaks of greater protection for Tibet's glaciers, citing their alarming retreat

04 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Citing research from scientific institutions that underscored alarming rate of glacier retreat, China

said Nov 4 that glaciers of Tibet autonomous region (TAR) will receive better legal protection with the implementation of regulations that came into effect on Oct 1, reported the official *chinadaily.com.cn* Nov 4. But if China's record on acting or, rather, not-acting on Tibetan public complaints about environmentally devastating – even illegal – resource extraction works being carried out in their local areas is anything to go by, this may be yet another lip service on an otherwise grave issue.

The ground reality is that such kinds of laws are just not seen being implemented in Tibetan areas where it has been the victims who suffered crackdown and punishment for complaining or protesting against the violations of such laws.

Just recently, a 29-year-old Tibetan youth named Tsongon Tsering in Ngaba (or Ngawa, Chinese: Aba) county of Sichuan Province was detained and ousted from the country's social media last month after he filed official complaints and made a social media expose of an environmentally devastating, illegal sand-mining being carried out by an internationally prominent Chinese building company in his Tsaruma village of Khyungchu (Hongyuan) County.

The authorities admitted the sand-mining work was both illegal and environmentally destructive. But the company was let off with only a token fine on the basis of an official report filled with falsehood, according to the online complainant.

The Tsaruma River, on whose bed the devastating sand-mining work was taking place, is linked to the Driчу (Yangtze) and Machu (Yellow) River systems, two of China's most important.

The *chinadaily.com.cn* report said the necessity of these regulations was highlighted by the Tibet Development and Reform Commission (TDRC), adding that the protection of glaciers is not only vital for the TAR but also held significance for the ecological security of the entire Tibetan Plateau and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The report cited Sodron, director of TDRC's department of resource conservation and environmental protection, as saying existing policies and regulations concerning glacier protection were deemed inadequate, lacking effective oversight and management mechanisms.

"The formulation of the Xizang Autonomous Region Glacier Protection Regulations is a targeted response to address these shortcomings and provides clear and comprehensive guidelines for glacier protection efforts in Xizang," she has said, using the Sinicized name for TAR.

The report said the regulations imposed penalties on construction units or permit holders engaging in activities such as infrastructure development or resource extraction in glacier-adjacent areas without proper mitigation measures. Violators face fines

ranging from 20,000 yuan (\$2,800) to 100,000 yuan, underscoring the stringent enforcement mechanisms embedded within the legislation.

As regards the urgency for the more stringent regulations, the report said that in recent months, research from scientific institutions such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Northwest Institute of Eco-Environment and Resources and the Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research had underscored the alarming rate of glacier retreat, attributing it to the escalating impacts of global climate change. These revelations further emphasize the urgency of robust glacier protection measures, the report said.

He Xiaobo, head of the Tangula Mountains Cryosphere and Environment Observation and Research Station of TAR, has said the Tibetan Plateau, known as the "Roof of the World", plays an irreplaceable role in ecological security.

"Glaciers, as crucial components of the plateau's ecosystem, serve not only as the source of many major rivers in Asia but also play a vital role in regulating regional climate and maintaining biodiversity," he has said.

Based on China's Second Chinese Glacier Inventory, the PRC has 48,571 glaciers, with approximately 82% in a state of retreat, adding that this poses challenges to water resource management and the health of ecosystems in the country.

There are more than 21,800 glaciers in TAR, representing 45% of glaciers distributed in the PRC; they cover nearly 23,800 square kilometres, He has added.



## Inaugural Tibetan Artists Festival honours artists and intellectuals

29 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon



*Bhuchung D Sonam, Festival Director of the Tibetan Artists Festival delivering opening remarks on Nov. 29, 2024 (Photo/Tenzin Leckphel)*

## TIBET IN EXILE

The Tibetan exile community came together on Friday morning to celebrate the inaugural Tibetan Artists Festival, a vibrant showcase of its rich artistic heritage by bringing together 30 exiled artists from around the globe that included writers, musicians, intellectuals and painters among others. The three-day festival organised by TibetWrites, a Tibetan-run publishing outfit, is the brainchild of Tibetan writer and poet Bhuchung D. Sonam.

The opening ceremony captivated the audience with soul-stirring performances by the Grammy-nominated artist Tenzin Choegyal and singer Sonam Dolma. Bhuchung D. Sonam, festival director and co-founder of TibetWrites, dedicated the festival to Tibetans living under Chinese colonial rule, particularly the artists, writers, poets, and filmmakers who continue to express their truths despite facing harassment, imprisonment, torture, and even death.

“For them, we want to dedicate this festival,” Bhuchung said, emphasising the resilience and courage of those who create art under oppressive conditions to voice the struggles and aspirations of the Tibetan people.

Tsering Yangzom Lama, the acclaimed author of *We Measure the Earth with Our Bodies*, delivered a keynote address on ‘Why Writing Matters’ where she emphasised that, for her, art is an act of love and a testament to the beauty of Tibetan existence despite the pain of displacement and oppression. Lama recounted her experience at a Tibetan Writers’ Retreat, where participants explored what it means to be Tibetan and also discussed solidarity with other marginalised communities, including African Americans, Palestinians, and Indigenous peoples, drawing parallels between their struggles and those of Tibetans.

Reflecting on her upbringing in Canada, Tsering critiqued the lack of education about Indigenous peoples and the prevalent stereotypes that frame

them as relics of the past. She observed how, despite these challenges, Indigenous art is often aesthetically appreciated while the lives and histories behind the work are overlooked. However, years later Tsering noted significant shifts: protests for indigenous women's rights, renamed streets honouring indigenous heritage, and bookstores prominently featuring Indigenous literature. "There is a growing consciousness in Canada, America, Australia, and parts of Europe—a shift happening because of the labour of indigenous people but also the other communities who have been marginalised," she said.

Tsering highlighted how these movements benefit all communities by encouraging conversations about colonisation by amplifying silenced voices. She acknowledged the victories of marginalised groups and expressed hope for a similar awakening within Chinese society, even if it may take decades. "What I do know," she said, "is that literature and art have reached parts of the world we never imagined before. This is due to the hard work of Indigenous writers, Black writers, LGBTQ writers, and others who persevered when no one was paying attention, ready for the moment the world finally listened."

Reflecting on her interactions with readers worldwide, Tsering shared her surprise at how many people remain unaware of Tibetan stories. "As Tibetans, we often feel like we are shouting to the world, but many still don't know our story," she said. She underscored the power of art, not as a tool of persuasion but as a spiritual expression that speaks to the shared humanity of Tibetan people. "If art does what it does well, it will reach people, and the answer will be self-evident—that Tibetan people deserve the same rights as everyone else."

Speaking to *Phayul*, Bhuchung D. Sonam, the festival's director, shared that the idea for the Tibetan Artists Festival had been on his mind for six years. "We are a scattered community, spread across more than 30 countries, and so are our artists. We need to come together to understand what art is, its impact on society and politics, and how artists can contribute to the Tibetan freedom struggle. This gathering is a space to think collectively and help people realize the power of art," he said, explaining the inspiration behind organising the festival.

The festival is supported by Tibet Fund, whose Regional Director, Sherab Woesser, told *Phayul*, "The Tibet Fund supports the Tibetan Artists Festival as it aligns with its mission to preserve and promote Tibetan culture. This festival provides a platform for traditional and contemporary Tibetan artists to showcase their work, ensuring Tibetan art thrives in exile. It encourages self-expression, innovation, and collaboration, helping artists reach wider audiences while maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity."

The Tibetan Artists Festival runs until December 1 over the weekend, offering a dynamic mix of music, storytelling, and poetry, alongside engaging panel discussions, music concerts, and live art performances, highlighting the richness of Tibetan creativity and heritage. Notable participants include seasoned and emerging musicians, writers, and visual artists whose works reflect the nuanced experiences of Tibetan diaspora life.

### Critical Schooling Situation in Tibet Raised at 17th UN Forum on Minority Issues

29 November 2024, [CTA](#)



*The UN Advocacy Officer of the Central Tibetan Administration, Phuntsok Topgyal, speaking during the ongoing 17th United Nations Forum on Minority Issues.*

The 17th United Nations Forum on Minority Issues is being held in Geneva with the participation of approximately 690 attendees, marking a significant increase in engagement compared to previous years, according to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Secretariat. The forum brings together a diverse group of experts, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and individuals to address critical issues affecting national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities worldwide.

This year's forum explores four primary themes: representation in public spaces, education, media and culture. Discussions focus on the inclusion of minorities in public decision-making, the preservation of their history and heritage in educational systems, the role of media and cultural platforms in amplifying minority voices. Attendees are also assessing policies that ensure minority groups can engage fully in their own cultural activities and practices.

Earlier today on 29 November 2024, Phuntsok Topgyal, the UN Advocacy Officer from the Tibet Bureau Geneva, highlighted the dire situation in Tibet during a session on education. He condemned the Chinese government for what he described as a systematic campaign of cultural destruction that threatens the survival of Tibetan identity.

The UN Advocacy Officer disclosed that over 1 million Tibetan children have been forcibly enrolled in colonial-style boarding schools where Tibetan

language instruction is banned, and Mandarin is enforced as the only medium of communication. He further detailed the demolition of sacred sites like Atsok Monastery and the relocation of Tibetan populations from their ancestral lands.

“The persecution is not limited to infrastructure and education,” Topgyal said. “Advocates for Tibetan cultural preservation face severe repression, with individuals like Tsering Tso detained for speaking out against ethnic discrimination. The removal of young monks from religious institutions signals a direct attack on the transmission of Tibetan traditions to future generations.”

The council is considering actions to hold the Chinese government accountable for its atrocities and ensure equal rights for Tibetan children to receive education in the Tibetan language.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues has issued a formal call for contributions to the ongoing UN Forum on Minority Issues. Participants are invited to share their experiences, perspectives, and data related to challenges and opportunities concerning the representation and self-representation of minorities in public spaces and discourse.

The forum seeks to identify obstacles faced by minorities and highlight effective initiatives and good practices that promote their fair and equitable representation. Contributions from participants will inform the Chairperson’s summary of the forum’s discussions.

Based on the dialogue and input received, the Special Rapporteur will prepare a detailed report outlining the forum’s recommendations, which will be submitted to the Human Rights Council. This initiative is part of a broader effort to strengthen the representation of minorities in line with international human rights standards.

### **Sikyong Visits Tibetan Institutions in Mundgod, Implores Residents to Uphold Tibetan Spiritual and Cultural Heritage**

28 November 2024, [CTA](#)

On 27 November 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering began official visits to Tibetan settlement and institutions in Mundgod following the completion of long-life prayers offering at Ganden Tritok Khang.

The engagements began at the [STS School](#), where Sikyong delivered an inspiring speech to the students, emphasising the importance of Tibet as an ecological region vital to the health of the planet. Sikyong spoke about the critical role Tibet plays in preserving the global environment, particularly as the “water tower of Asia” and urged the students to be aware of their heritage and the unique position they hold as future

leaders in preserving Tibetan culture and contributing to global sustainability.



*Sikyong Visits Tibetan Institutions in Mundgod, Implores Residents to Uphold Tibetan Spiritual and Cultural Heritage*

“Your education here is not just about learning academic subjects; it is about carrying forward the responsibility to safeguard our land, our culture, and our environment for future generations,” Sikyong said, motivating the young students to stay committed to their studies and take pride in their identity.

After addressing the students, Sikyong visited Camp 3 and Rangzen Hall, where he met with community members and general public, further engaging with the Tibetan diaspora in the region. Sikyong’s next stop was at the Ex-Servicemen Welfare Association, where he paid tribute to the martyrs of the Tibetan community, offering flowers in honour of their sacrifices.

Sikyong then proceeded to the branch Men-Tsee-Khang, the Tibetan medical and astro-science institute, where he had a brief visit, acknowledging the significant role the institution plays in preserving traditional Tibetan medicine and healing practices.

Later in the day, Sikyong visited STS School (Camp 1), where he interacted with young students.

Sikyong also took time to visit the Camp 1 and [Sakya Monastery](#) where he briefly toured the monastery, followed by a visit to the Nyingma Monastery where he inaugurated a newly constructed water tank, which will improve access to clean water for the monastery and surrounding area.

The final stop of his day-long visit was Gaden Lachi, where he addressed a gathering of monks organised by the Gaden Lachi Monastery. Speaking to the monks, Sikyong reiterated the importance of preserving the spiritual and cultural heritage of Tibet, emphasising the role of monastic institutions in nurturing wisdom, compassion, and resilience within the Tibetan community.



## Tibetan advocacy alliance lobbies Indian MPs with three appeals

27 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon



Members of the Tibet Advocacy Alliance-India with Dr. Shashi Tharoor, MP from Kerala and Chairperson of the Committee on External Affairs in New Delhi (Photo/FNVA)

The Tibet Advocacy Alliance-India launched its advocacy week in New Delhi on Monday, aligning with the commencement of India's winter parliamentary session. This coalition comprises prominent civil society organisations, including the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), Tibetan Women's Association (TWA), National Democratic Party of Tibet (NDPT), and Students for a Free Tibet (SFT). The initiative is coordinated by the International Tibet Network (ITN) with support from the Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives (FNVA).

As a unified platform of Tibetan NGOs, the alliance is dedicated to fostering strategic and coordinated advocacy efforts to strengthen Indian parliamentary engagement on Tibet-related issues. Now in its third phase, the advocacy week featured meetings with several prominent Indian parliamentarians, including Dr. Shashi Tharoor, MP from Kerala and Chairperson of the Committee on External Affairs; Shri Mohamad Haneefa, MP from Ladakh and Member of the Committee on Defence; Dr. Bimol Akoijam, MP from Manipur and Member of the Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports; Shri E.T. Mohammed Basheer, MP from Kerala and Member of the Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment and others.

Tenzing Dhamdul, a senior research associate at FNVA, told *Phayul* that the alliance presented three key appeals regarding Tibet during their advocacy: to recognise Tibet as an occupied nation, honour His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, and advocate for the preservation of Tibetan culture and language. Reflecting on their engagement with 12 MPs during the second phase of their campaign, Dhamdul noted that the meetings were met with a very positive and welcoming response. He added that this approach of

openness and receptiveness is something Tibetans could also learn from.

He told *Phayul* that some parliamentarians had prior involvement in Tibet-related issues, while others were new to the cause. MPs familiar with Tibetan matters acknowledged the significance of the appeals, though they indicated that not all would gain traction. "Out of the three appeals, some MPs said one may not work, but we will still advocate for it," Dhamdul remarked. He further highlighted a point of consensus among the MPs: unanimous support for the second appeal—honouring His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who turns 90 next year. Additionally, the MPs expressed alignment with the third appeal, criticising China's colonial-style boarding schools for undermining Tibetan culture and language.

"The first appeal, however, appeared challenging for few MPs, as they needed to consider the Ministry of External Affairs' position and India's official stance on the matter," Dhamdul told *Phayul*. He explained that given India's historical position on Tibet during the tenures of leaders like Nehru and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the MPs refrained from commenting extensively on the first appeal, deeming it too sensitive. "Nonetheless, some MPs acknowledged that India shares a border with Tibet, not China," he added.

When asked whether the week-long advocacy efforts would lead to policy-level changes, Dhamdul opined that the primary role of MPs is to cast their vote in favour or against during policy-making processes. "While there may not be immediate changes at the policy level, what MPs can contribute is fostering national fervor. We believe parliament serves as a crucial platform to engage and convince MPs on Tibet-related issues," he said. Dhamdul emphasised that ultimately, policy-level changes are necessary, and parliament remains one of the key instruments in achieving that.

Concluding his remarks, Dhamdul reflected on the past two days of engagement with MPs, noting how deeply welcoming India was to the exiled spiritual leader following Tibet's colonial occupation—a response he observed was not mirrored by nations like the US and Britain. "India extended its hand of support during the critical time, and this sentiment deeply resonated with me during these engagements," he said. Dhamdul also shared that some MPs acknowledged the historical blunder India made by accepting Tibet as a part of China.

## G7 nations condemn China's human rights record in Tibet, East Turkestan, and Hong Kong

27 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



Leaders of the G7 nations in Italy (Photo/Reuters)

The foreign ministers of the G7 nations, alongside the European Union High Representative, have expressed concerns over China's human rights record, particularly in Tibet, East Turkestan, and Hong Kong and urged China to abide by international legal commitment.

Their concerns were outlined in a collective [statement](#) following the second G7 Foreign Affairs Ministers' meeting, hosted under Italy's presidency on Tuesday. "We remain concerned by the human rights situation in China, including in East Turkestan and Tibet," the statement stated.

They expressed their unease regarding Beijing's ongoing suppression of freedoms and civil liberties in Hong Kong, pointing to the sentencing of 45 pro-democracy activists as a severe setback for democracy and the rule of law. "The sentencing of 45 pro-democracy politicians and activists marks a further deterioration of democratic participation and pluralism, which undermines confidence in the rule of law as enshrined in the Hong Kong Basic Law, and therefore Hong Kong's and the People's Republic of China's international legal obligations."

The ministers urged authorities of both China and Hong Kong to honor their international human rights commitments, stating, "We remain concerned by the erosion of civil society, human rights, and fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong."

The group reaffirmed their collective commitment to defending international law and promoting universal human rights. "We reiterate our commitment to foster respect for international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, to protect human rights and dignity for all individuals," the statement read.

This declaration builds upon the G7's earlier criticisms during their first Foreign Affairs Ministers' meeting in April, where similar concerns were raised about [China's human rights practices](#) in Tibet East Turkistan and Hong Kong.

The Group of Seven (G-7) is an intergovernmental organization made up of the world's largest developed economies: France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada with the European Union participating as a non-enumerated member. Government leaders of these countries meet periodically to address international economic and monetary issues, with each member taking over the presidency on a rotating basis.

## Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Led by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Continues Scotland Study Mission

27 November 2024, [CTA](#)

A delegation of the Tibetan parliament-in-Exile led by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, and consisting of MP Dawa Tsering and MP Ratsa Sonam Norbu convened their second day of Scotland study mission with an engaging introduction to the Rules, Roles, and Functions of the Finance and Public Administration Committee by Cameron Garrett, Research & Policy Officer, and Ross Greer MSP. This was followed by a visit to observe the committee in session.

The committee hearing focused on Scotland's public finances, public service reform, the National Performance Framework, and public administration in government. A key agenda item involved gathering evidence from the Office of Budget Responsibility regarding Scotland's 2025/26 Budget.

Later, the delegation received a briefing on the Equality and Human Rights Committee of the Scottish Parliament, followed by an observation of its hearing. Following this, the delegation participated in a thought-provoking discussion with Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren, Secretariat of the Cross-Party Group on Tibet, and Cameron Garrett, Research & Policy Officer, alongside Ross Greer MSP. The conversation centred on the committee's role in promoting equality and human rights and its contributions to fostering inclusivity.

The delegation also had the opportunity to meet Jamie Dunlop, Chief Executive of the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP). The discussion revolved around the organisation's pivotal role in empowering young people to exercise their rights and amplify their voices to decision-makers. Jamie Dunlop elaborated on his responsibilities, which include overseeing the organisation's daily operations, acting as a liaison between the SYP board and staff, ensuring proper governance, and implementing strategic plans to drive youth engagement and participation in democratic processes.

The delegation later held a private meeting with the Co-Leaders of the Scottish Greens, Patrick Harvie,

Lorna Slater, Maggie Chapman, Ariane Burgess, Gillian Mackay and Mark Ruskell.

The Scottish Greens, known for their historic contributions in government, discussed their efforts in climate action, renewable energy, and social justice. The meeting explored their parliamentary roles and strategies for raising the Tibetan issue within their legislative framework. Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel also addressed the critical situation in Tibet and provided insights into the evolution of Tibetan democracy in exile.

In the evening, the delegation observed the Stage 2 Proceedings of the Prisoners (Early Release) (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament. This emergency legislation session showcased the Parliament's ability to address urgent challenges with agility and precision. From the public gallery, the delegation witnessed MSPs engaging in dynamic debates as they scrutinised, amended, and shaped critical legislation in real-time. It was an invaluable opportunity to observe Scotland's legislative process responding to crises with focus and adaptability.

The day provided a rich understanding of Scotland's governance structure, legislative processes, and the role of its committees in driving impactful decision-making. From dynamic parliamentary debates to meaningful discussions with key stakeholders, the delegation gained invaluable insights into how inclusive and participatory democracy operates in Scotland.

### **Sikyong Penpa Tsering Attends the Enthronement Ceremony of the 105th Gaden Tri Rinpoche**

27 November 2024, [CTA](#)



*The 105th Gaden Tri Rinpoche, Jetsun Lobsang Dorjee Pelsangpo.*

On 26 November 2024, Sikyong Penpa Tsering attended the enthronement ceremony of the Sharpa Choeje Rinpoche Jetsun Lobsang Dorjee Pelsangpo as the 105th Gaden Tripa at Gaden Lachi.

With profound wisdom and insight, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, on 2 November, bestowed the responsibility of 105th Ganden Tripa to Sharpa Choeje

Rinpoche as the regent of Jamgon Chokyi Gyalpo Tsongkhapa, the founder of Gelug (yellow hat) school of Tibetan Buddhism.

On the day of the enthronement ceremony, the new Gaden Tri Rinpoche was ceremonially escorted to Gaden Lachi amidst a grand procession with incense and traditional welcome by the monks from the Gaden Shartse and Jangtse monasteries, along with distinguished guests and devoted followers. Rinpoche then conferred teaching on Tsongkhapa's *lam-rim*.

On the subsequent day, the entire Gelug school is scheduled to offer a long-life prayer to the 105th Gaden Tri Rinpoche.

### **TYC team embarks on bike rally to gather support for Tibet's cause**

27 November 2024, [The Arunachal Times](#), Prem Chetry

A team of 11 bikers and four volunteers of Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) embarked on a motorcycle rally to garner support and create awareness for Tibet's freedom.

The rally was flagged from Bum-la Pass in Indo-Tibet border on 22 November by Bharat Tibet Sahyog Manch national general secretary Pankaj Goya. It will cover approximately 15000 km,

passing through 22 states and a union territory.

The team arrived here in West Kameng district on Tuesday evening and went to the historic Khenzimane in Zemithang circle, the place where the 14th Dalai Lama set his feet during his escape from Tibet in 1959.

"The primary objective of the rally is to expose the atrocities committed by the Communist China in Tibet and to oppose its illegitimate rule," TYC president Gonpo Dondup, said.

"We seek to draw the attention of the international community towards the ongoing cultural genocide in Tibet, where China is implementing hard-line policies designed to systematically eradicate Tibetan culture and identity," Dondup said.

"These policies include forced enrolment of Tibetan children in colonial-style boarding schools, restricting access to educational activities related to Tibetan culture, and imprisoning teachers and individuals, who strive to preserve the Tibetan language," he said.

"Additionally, the forced closure of Tibetan schools and monastic institutions poses a significant threat to the preservation of Tibetan culture, language, and spiritual heritage. This blatant violation of rights and freedoms serves as a stark reminder of the Chinese government's relentless efforts to suppress Tibetan identity," he said, and called upon the international community to exert pressure on China to stop its unlawful activities aimed at erasing Tibetan culture, and to respect the rights of the Tibetan people.



He said that for thousands of years, Tibet existed as an independent country, maintaining harmonious relationships with its neighbouring countries. However, following the unfortunate occupation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China in 1959, the historically peaceful Indo-Tibet border was shattered, Dondup said.

He further urged the Indian government to adopt a resolution that supports the independent status of Tibet and recognise the historical Indo-Tibet border.

"In recent years, the Chinese government has intensified the exploitation of Tibet's rich mineral resources under the guise of developmental projects, endangering the environment of the Tibetan Plateau and threatening the survival of historically significant sites and monasteries. The damming projects on the Drichu River and other rivers in Tibet will have devastating implications on Tibetans and downstream countries. The massive damming initiatives and nuclear production, combined with the dumping of nuclear wastes and reckless development policies, are wreaking havoc on Tibet's environment, subsequently contributing to ecological imbalance worldwide," he added.

During the course of the rally, the bikers will visit Tibetan winter markets across India to create awareness about the ongoing cultural genocide perpetrated by China in Tibet as well as the importance of staying united against China. They will also engage with the members of parliament, members of the legislative assemblies, Tibet Support Groups and media, while also raising awareness among the Indian populace on the critical issues facing Tibet today.

### **New 5-year programme launched of US support for south Asia Tibetan communities**

26 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The US government has on Nov 25 launched at Dharamshala a new five-year programme to support Tibetan communities in South Asia, with focus on "Strengthening Economic, Social, and Cultural Resilience of Tibetan Communities in South Asia". The event was held at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts.

The programme will be led by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with New York-based Tibet Fund and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the elected leadership of the exile Tibetans.

The programme builds on decades of collaboration to support Tibetan communities, reflecting a shared commitment to their welfare, self-reliance, and cultural preservation, said the US Embassy, New Delhi, in a statement Nov 25.

The statement said the initiative seeks to empower Tibetan communities by fostering sustainable livelihoods, enhancing social resilience, and preserving Tibetan cultural heritage. It places the CTA at the forefront of development efforts, supporting its leadership in delivering locally driven solutions for its communities. Key programme activities include job training, entrepreneurship support, and skills development to promote economic independence, as well as preserving Tibetan language, arts, and traditions.

USAID Mission Director Steve Olive has said, "The US Government's commitment to preserving Tibetan culture and fostering economic independence is unwavering. This new initiative strengthens community bonds, deepens economic opportunities, and celebrates the rich cultural heritage of Tibetan communities. By working closely with the CTA and The Tibet Fund, we aim to empower Tibetans to build resilient and self-reliant communities for generations to come."

Applauding the US support, the executive head, sikyong Penpa Tsering, of the CTA has said: "USAID has been a longstanding, steadfast partner to the CTA for many years, playing a pivotal role in our development efforts. We are deeply grateful for this continued collaboration and remain committed to further strengthening the partnership to drive meaningful, lasting change in the Tibetan community. This new initiative is a powerful step forward, poised to significantly strengthen the economic, social, and cultural resilience of the Tibetan community in South Asia. It will not only strengthen our efforts towards preserving our rich cultural heritage and traditions but also empower future generations to thrive and shape a brighter, more sustainable future."

And Bob Ankerson, President of The Tibet Fund, has said, "We are committed to creating transformative opportunities for Tibetans, empowering them not only to preserve their cultural heritage but also to advance economically and socially in an ever-changing world."

By advancing economic opportunities, promoting sustainable development, and safeguarding cultural heritage, it reflects a shared vision for a future where Tibetan communities can thrive and maintain their unique identity, said the embassy statement.

## USAID's Mission Director Steve Olive led Delegation Visits Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

26 November 2024, [CTA](#)



USAID's Mission Director Steve Olive led Delegation Visits Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile

USAID Mission Director Steve Olive, accompanied by Mark Tegenfeldt, Office Director, GDO; Balaka Dey, Development Assistance Specialist, GDO; and Martha Van Lieshout, Team Lead, USAID/India DOC Team, visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on 25 November 2024.

They were warmly received by Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, who guided them on a tour of the parliament hall. This was followed by a meeting with the Deputy Speaker and members of the Standing Committee at the Standing Committee's hall.

Welcoming the delegation, the Deputy Speaker expressed her sincere gratitude to the United States and its people for their unwavering support of Tibet's just cause. She specifically acknowledged the U.S. for adopting numerous bills and resolutions in support of Tibet, as well as for its continued assistance to the Tibetan people in sustaining their democratic system and promoting their welfare through various ongoing programs under USAID.

The delegation's visit to Dharamshala underscored the fact that the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) is the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people worldwide. Their visit to the seat of the CTA would offer them a deeper understanding of its structure, initiatives, and other important aspects of its work.

Further discussing the recently held COP29 climate conference in Azerbaijan, the Deputy Speaker called for scientific research on the Tibetan Plateau under the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). She emphasised the significant role of the Tibetan Plateau in global climate patterns, pointing out its impact on climate change through the loss of pasturelands, the thinning of glaciers, and the flow of its rivers. She also urged for the inclusion of a representative from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile at future climate conferences to raise awareness about Tibet's environmental crisis on the global stage.

As a former educator, the Deputy Speaker also underscored the importance of education for Tibetan children, particularly higher specialised education. She appealed for more seats to be made available to Tibetans in the Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP) under the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), which provides opportunities for Tibetans to excel in their chosen fields of study.

The meeting concluded with a discussion between the USAID Mission Director and members of the Standing Committee on various ongoing and upcoming programs and projects.

## Central Tibetan Administration Hosts Symposium in Taipei on Building Common Ground with Key Allies

26 November 2024, [CTA](#)



Central Tibetan Administration Hosts Symposium in Taipei on Building Common Ground with Key Allies

The Snow Land Forum: 2024, titled "Symposium on Finding Common Ground", organised by the Tibet Religious Foundation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Taiwan (also called Office of Tibet), was held at National Chengchi University on 23-24 November.

This two-day event focused on the impact of U.S. legislation on Tibet and the prospect of international Tibet policy, addressing Tibet's position within the shifting global political landscape as China grows increasingly authoritarian under Xi Jinping. The symposium also explored democratic movements in China and its regions like Hong Kong, Southern Mongolia, East Turkistan, and Taiwan amidst rising tensions between Western democracies and authoritarian states.

Secretary Ngawa Tsegyam, Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama; Political Secretary Tashi Gyatso Shadrong, Cabinet Secretariat; Secretary Karma Choeying, Department of Information and International Relations; Secretary Dawa Tsering, Director of the Tibetan Policy Institute; Representative Kelsang Gyaltzen Bawa, Office of Tibet-Taipei; Jamyang Tsering, Editor of the CTA's Official Chinese Website; Tenzin Phentok, researcher at the Tibet Policy Institute; Tsultrim Gyatso, Chinese Liaison Officer Office of Tibet,

Washington DC; Sangye Kyab, Chinese Liaison Officer to Europe; Dawa Sangmo, Chinese Liaison Officer to Australia; Dr Gyalo, a Tibetan Sociologist and activist; and others representing Tibetan NGOs attended the symposium from Tibetan side, along with numerous scholars and activists from Tibet's key allies, namely Chinese pro-democrats, Taiwan, East Turkistan, Hong Kong, and Southern Mongolia.

At the forum's opening ceremony, Secretary Karma Choeying of the Department of Information and International Relations highlighted that the Central Tibetan Administration has consistently presented Tibet's factual historical context on the global stage. The Secretary further pointed out that the recent U.S. legislation addressing the Tibet-China conflict not only challenges China's distortion of Tibetan history but also reinforces strong support for unconditional dialogue between the two sides. Secretary Karma Choeying reaffirmed the Central Tibetan Administration's firm commitment to resolving the Tibetan-Chinese conflict through dialogue based on the Middle Way Approach policy, emphasising that this policy is a crucial approach that is beneficial for both Tibetans and Chinese in the long term.

The morning session of 23 November discussed "Overview of Tibet's International Status and U.S. Legislation on Tibet", which was moderated by Professor Chen Mumin of National Chung Hsing University. The panellists of this session included Representative Kalsang Gyaltzen Bawa, Office of Tibet; Ming Chu-cheng, Professor Emeritus of Political Science at National Taiwan University; and Akio Yaita, CEO of the Indo-Pacific Strategy Think Tank. They discussed the impact of successive U.S. legislations on Tibet and their importance in shaping international support for Tibet.

During the session, Professor Chen emphasised that the Tibet issue is not only a regional concern but an international issue, reflecting the broader trend of identity politics that now drives global conflicts. Representative Kalsang Gyaltzen Bawa highlighted the significance of U.S. legislative actions, such as the "Promoting a Resolution to Tibet-China Dispute Act", which affirms that Tibet is not part of China and recognises the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people. He added, "This legislation has faced strong criticism from China, yet the international community's support for Tibet continues to grow."

CEO Akio Yaita compared the approaches of both political parties of the U.S. and stressed that aligning the interests of both Taiwan and Tibet with the U.S. foreign policy is crucial for their respective causes.

Furthermore, Professor Emeritus Ming Chu-cheng discussed the four main historical aspects of the Tibet cause: human rights, ethnicity, religion, and cultural identity. He criticised China's lack of respect for human

rights, particularly religious freedom, which remains a fundamental concern for many democratic nations. He emphasised that China's distortion of universal human rights values and the ongoing oppression of Tibetans, including genocide, must be clearly addressed in global discourse and called for greater awareness of Tibet's unique cultural identity, which he believes is critical not only for Tibetans but for the broader international community.

The afternoon session, titled "International Support for Tibet and CTA's Chinese Outreach Work", saw participation from Hung Kuo-chun, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Watchout, and CTA officials. COO Hung pointed out the historical and democratic parallels between Taiwan and Tibet, suggesting that both can learn from each other as they navigate their respective struggles for autonomy and international recognition.

Likewise, Jamyang Tsering, Editor of the CTA's Official Chinese Website, and Tsultrim Gyatso, Chinese Liaison Officer Office of Tibet, Washington DC, noted the growing international attention to Tibet cause, highlighting how global powers, including the U.S., UK, Canada, and Japan, have issued joint statements condemning China's persecution of Tibetans. Tenzin Phentok, a researcher from the Tibet Policy Institute, explained China's divisive strategy of geographically separating Tibet into the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and four other Tibetan-inhabited provinces. This division, she argued, seeks to undermine Tibetan unity and brainwash the international community into accepting Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

Additionally, Sangye Kyab, Chinese Liaison Officer to Europe, shared insights into the evolving attitudes within China, noting that while some Chinese still support the idea of a unified China, younger generations are increasingly supportive of Tibetan self-determination. Dawa Sangmo, Chinese Liaison Officer to Australia, emphasised the importance of strengthening Tibetan-Chinese exchanges and coordination between Tibetan advocacy groups and international governments to further the Tibetan cause.

The session concluded with a call for continued international solidarity and strategic outreach, urging governments to take clear, decisive actions in support of Tibet. Speakers agreed that increased coordination between the Tibetan community and global powers is essential to counter China's attempts to isolate Tibet and erase its cultural identity.

## Tibetan Parliamentary delegation concludes London mission with key advocacy meetings on Tibet's global cause

25 November 2024, [ANI](#)

A Tibetan parliamentary delegation, led by Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and accompanied by MPs Dawa Tsering and Ratsa Sonam Norbu, visited the Office of Tibet in London on November 22, 2024, marking the conclusion of their four-day London Study Mission.

According to a press release by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the delegation was received by Tsering Yangkyi, the representative of Tibet in the UK, and the staff of the Office of Tibet, in what was a significant step in advancing the Tibetan cause in the global political arena.

According to CTA, the day's most pivotal event was a roundtable discussion with members of the Tibet Support Group (TSG), during which Speaker Tenphel shared the outcomes of the delegation's meetings with prominent UK parliamentary leaders, experts, and advocates for Tibet. A central theme of the discussion was the revitalization of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Tibet, a key platform for advancing Tibet's cause within the UK Parliament. Speaker Tenphel highlighted the importance of greater cooperation between Tibet, Hong Kong, and Uyghur advocacy groups, all of which are united in their fight against oppressive regimes and their efforts to draw attention to human rights violations.

During the meeting, Speaker Tenphel emphasised the necessity of strengthening Tibet's presence on the UK's legislative agenda. He called for a coordinated push to ensure that Tibet is addressed more prominently within international forums, with a focus on securing policy reforms similar to the US Resolve Tibet Act, which would advocate for concrete actions on Tibet's behalf globally. The discussions also centred on enhancing international advocacy, challenging the Chinese government's portrayal of Tibet as a thriving region under its rule, and pushing for a more accurate depiction of Tibet's reality. The China-Tibet issue centres on a complex political, cultural, and religious conflict between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Tibet. Tibet, a historically distinct region with its own unique culture, language, and religious traditions, was incorporated into China in the early 1950s. While the Chinese government asserts that Tibet is an inseparable part of China, citing historical ties, many Tibetans, particularly those led by the Dalai Lama, have long called for greater autonomy or even full independence.

The situation took a dramatic turn in 1959 when a Tibetan uprising was violently suppressed by Chinese forces, leading to the Dalai Lama's exile in India. Since then, China has imposed strict control over Tibet,

enacting policies aimed at integrating Tibetans into broader Chinese society. These measures include the promotion of the Chinese language, large-scale resettlement programs, and restrictions on religious practices, particularly Tibetan Buddhism. These actions have sparked widespread international condemnation, with critics accusing China of cultural suppression, religious persecution, and the marginalization of Tibetans in their own homeland.

## Dharamshala: Tibetan monk transforming lives of slum children helping them through higher studies

24 November 2024, [ANI](#)

Lobsang Jamyang, a Tibetan monk who was born in Tibet but living in exile, is working hard to change the lives of slum children in Sarah village near Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh through education.

The monk has changed the lives of hundreds of slum children who, until they met him, were either ragpickers or used to beg on the streets.

The Tong-Len Charitable Trust, which he started two decades ago with two UK volunteers, has made a significant change in the lives of those slum children, who now have become doctors, engineers, and journalists. The Dalai Lama Trust also provides them with every possible help. Lobsang Jamyang, founder Tong-Len, opened up on their journey, and said they tried to save the lives of slum children, and now many of them have made good careers.

"Initially in 2004, we tried to save the lives of slum children, and then we planned to provide them with primary education. Gradually, they reached middle school and then high school. They are very talented, and they reached college. They are capable of higher studies, and we support them. Some of them have now become doctors and engineers, and many are doing nursing training. One of our students, Dr Pinki, is a great inspiration for many students, and some are preparing for the NEET exam. We are also supporting some students who want to get coaching for UPSC, and some are preparing for allied services. So there are many such students," he told ANI.

Mamta, one of the slum student, who was helped by the trust, and is now preparing for the SSCJL exam aiming to do a government job reflected on her journey.

Speaking to ANI, she said, "I am one of the first ten students of Tong-Len when it was started in 2004. This institute has transformed many lives. If I had not been here, then I would have gotten married because our community doesn't keep unmarried girls beyond the age of 18. My parents have faith now that our girl is capable of doing anything. I want to get a government



job because, as per my knowledge, no one from our community is in the government sector, and I want to bring this change to our community."

Tong-Len was started in 2004 with just ten children, and at present, there are more than 340 students. Tong-Len, which means 'Give and Take,' has recently celebrated its 20th founding anniversary on the 19th of November in the north Indian hill town of Dharamshala here.

Pinki, another child who used to beg in the streets during her childhood, has went on to become a doctor now.

"I have just completed my MBBS degree on July 24, and I am preparing for the FMG exam. I am looking forward to passing this exam so that I can practice as a medical practitioner in India. The entire journey from 2004 to 24 is quite challenging. The change is from the bottom to the top, not only in our education point of view but also in our lifestyle. There is a change in our thinking. There is a change in every field. It was a big challenge for Guru Jamyang to convince and guide our parents, and I am happy that our parents made the right decision at that time. Now many children from our community are appearing in competitive exams as they are capable of all this," she said.

Lakshmi, a 9th-grade student also praised the trust and said many of the students have achieved a successful life with the help of the trust. "Many of the students of this organisation have achieved a successful life, and they are inspiring all of us. Some are doctors, engineers, and news reporters, and some are doing nursing training. We used to live in slums, and there were no basic facilities like food or water, but now there is a big change, and we are living in a social house here," she said.

### Tibetan Sikyong's Portugal visit seen as groundbreaking

23 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)



The visit of the executive head, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, of the exile Tibetan administration to Portugal, which included meetings with cross-party parliament members, from Nov 12 to 14 has been hailed as groundbreaking. It was the first visit of an elected exile

Tibetan political leader, after the Dalai Lama's 2001 and 2007 trips, said the Central Tibetan Administration on its *Tibet.net* website Nov 23.

Calling it a "significant step forward in the 16th Kashag's outreach strategy towards opening new doors of political engagement with previously untapped nations," the report said the Tibetan Sikyong met with Members of Parliament from four political parties during his visit to the country's capital Lisbon.

The meetings were stated to have included those with Regina Bastos and Bruno Ventura from the Social Democrat Party, Rui Tavares from the LIVRE party, Paula Inês Alves de Sousa Real from the People Animals Nature party, and Rodrigo Saraiva from the Liberal Initiative (IL) party.

The Tibetan Sikyong was stated to have delivered a crucial message to European nations through these meetings, urging them to re-evaluate their China policies in light of the EU's de-risking approach toward Beijing. This was stated to carry special significance as Portugal had recently seen increased Chinese investment, contrary to broader trends in Europe.

Following those meetings, Rodrigo Saraiva of the IL announced a draft parliamentary resolution, calling for self-determination for the Tibetan people. This provoked an angry reaction from the Chinese embassy in Lisbon, which called on the party, without mentioning its name, to cease "support for separatist activities" and "interference in Chinese internal affairs".

"We urge a certain political party to stop using issues related to Xizang (the Sinicized name for the territory of Tibet) to interfere in China's internal affairs and not to provide support for anti-China separatist activities," the *expresso.pt* Nov13 quoted the Chinese embassy as saying.

The report noted that earlier, in May 2023, the IL had approved a vote of concern in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Assembly of the Republic (AR), the unicameral parliament of Portugal, regarding the "29 years since the kidnapping of the 11th 'Panchen Lama' perpetrated by the People's Republic of China".

The Panchen Lama is Tibet's second most prominent religious figure. China abducted and disappeared him, at the age of 6, and his family just days after he was recognized by the Dalai Lama, Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, in 1995, and installed another boy in his place. While in Lisbon, the Tibetan Sikyong has also held discussions with Dr Vera Jardim, the President of the Commission on Religious Liberty and former Minister of Justice. He had previously met the Dalai Lama during the latter's visits to Portugal in 2001 and 2007. He has also held talks with Professor Paulo Morais and Dr Batalha, two social and political commentators, based in Porto, Portugal's second largest city, after Lisbon.

Professor Morais was stated to have been actively involved in organising the Dalai Lama's above two visits to Portugal.

### **Tibetan Oracle delivers message of faith at WVSOM**

21 November 2024, [WVSOM](#)

Noting a "special karma," the Nechung Oracle, Kuten-la, the official State Oracle of Tibet and spiritual advisor to the Dalai Lama, said his Nov. 19 visit to the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM) wasn't a random circumstance.

With the assistance of a translator, the Oracle told an audience of more than 120 that while strangers today, they were sharing the same space because they have a bond from a previous lifetime. He explained that in Buddhism, knowing who you are today requires reflecting on previous lifetimes.

Speaking during a public reception in his honor, the Oracle said he was honored to speak at WVSOM, where students learn to reduce suffering and show compassion and kindness. He called the reception "a special gathering in a special place."

The Oracle said it's important to consider the well-being of the body and mind but also the soul and spirit. During the reception, the Oracle shared a prayer with the audience and conducted individual blessings, with most of those present lining up for a personal moment.

WVSOM President James W. Nemitz, Ph.D., in a live video message, welcomed the Oracle to campus. Dawn Roberts, Ed.D., associate dean for multicultural and student affairs, and Katherine Calloway, D.O., regional assistant dean for the South Central Region of WVSOM's Statewide Campus, coordinated the reception.

The current Nechung Oracle is the Venerable Thupten Ngodup, who has been the medium of the Oracle since 1987. The Nechung Kuten-la was accompanied by Tenzin Rinchen, his personal assistant; Ganpat Purevdirj and Bayara Purevragchaa, both monks from the Nechung Monastery; Tenzin Chogyal, who organized the Oracle's tour of the U.S.; and Tenzin Thomson, who served as the translator at WVSOM.

Kuten-la visited members of Congress during a stop in Washington, D.C., the weekend before the WVSOM reception.

Talking of world events, the Oracle told the WVSOM audience that human beings fall into three groups: those with faith and spirituality, atheists and those who don't care about spirituality; and those who are anti-religion.

The Oracle was forced to flee Tibet for India in 1966 following the invasion of Tibet by the communist Chinese. Part of his mission in the U.S. is to represent the Tibetan Government-in-Exile.

The Oracle's stop in Lewisburg was the result of Calloway's visit in 2024 to India. In April, Calloway and four others — Megan Kelley and Sarah McQueen, WVSOM Class of 2025 medical students; Caroline LaFleur, M.D., of Medical Diplomats International; and Calloway's 15-year-old daughter, Grace — visited Dehradun, Uttarakhand and Dharamshala, India, and met with the Dalai Lama.

### **Exile Tibetan delegation visits Westminster as PM Starmer seeks to cement China ties**

21 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

As Labour Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer met with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the fringes of the G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on Nov 18, and emphasised the importance of a "strong UK-China relationship" for both countries, a delegation from the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPIE) has visited London to meet with key lawmakers in the country, according to *bbc.com* Nov 18 and *Tibet.net* Nov 20-21.

Starmer's was the first time a UK prime minister met the Chinese president in person since 2018, following a recent souring in relations under the erstwhile Conservative Party government. With China's military support for Russia's war in Ukraine having prompted criticism from the UK and other Western countries, the PM has said he wanted to "engage honestly and frankly" on areas of disagreement, including on Hong Kong, human rights and Russia's war in Ukraine, said the *bbc.com* report.

In London, the TPIE delegation of Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and member Dawa Tsering met with Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the Speaker of the House of Commons; Sir Geoffrey Clifton Browne, Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the House of Commons, other Members of Parliament (MPs), and some prominent figures over Nov 18-19, said *Tibet.net* reports.

The UK Speaker has appreciated the importance of resuming dialogue with China to address and resolve the Sino-Tibet issue.

Other meetings were stated to have been held with Baroness Julie Smith, Liberal Democrat spokesperson on Defence (House of Lords) and Member of the Federal Executive Committee; Lord David Alton, Member of the House of Lords; and Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament Sir Bobby Dean.

These engagements provided the delegation with valuable insights into the legislative processes of the UK Parliament. The Tibetan visitors explored how an idea evolves into a political party's policy, its navigation through the House of Lords, and the procedural steps required for a bill to be introduced, debated, and ultimately passed into legislation by both Houses of Parliament. They offered opportunities for

collaboration between the TPIE and the UK Parliament, said the *Tibet.net* report Nov 21.

Underlining the gravity of the situation in Tibet, marked by new Chinese policy measures that greatly heighten threats to the survival of the ethnic and cultural identity of the territory amid other severe human rights violations, Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel has appealed to the Speaker of the House of Commons to consider adopting a policy similar to the US Resolve Tibet Act.

That act, signed into law by President Joe Biden on Jul 12, rejects China's claim that Tibet has been part of it since ancient times, that its armed occupation and annexation of the territory in the middle of the last century was illegal under international law, and recognizes the Tibetan people's right to self-determination. The act requires the US to help counter China's official position on Tibet based on its "misinformation campaign" which underplays the territory's own rich culture and history of independence, and promote substantive dialogue without preconditions between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama or his representatives.

Also, another delegation of TPIE members, made up of Geshe Monlam Tharchin, Kunga Sotop, and Choedak Gyatso, has concluded its Tibet advocacy effort in Luxembourg.

The trio met with Gusty Graas, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Luxembourg Parliament and a member of the ruling party, on Nov 19 morning. They asked Graas to raise awareness and advocate for Tibet within the Luxembourgish Parliament. They emphasised that Tibet is an occupied nation, not a part of China, and called for action to counter ongoing Chinese propaganda, according to another *Tibet.net* report Nov 20.

They have also appealed for the adoption of a resolution on Tibet in the European Parliament and the appointment of a special coordinator for Tibetans within the European Parliament.

Graas has expressed concerns on the situation in Tibet and assured the Tibetan visitors that he would bring the issue to the attention of Luxembourg's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The TPIE members have also visited the European Court of Justice as well as met with David Pereira, Executive Director, and Morgane Gury, Communications and Digital Marketing Manager, at Amnesty International, and briefed them about the gravity of the current situation in Tibet under Chinese rule.

## Advocacy and Capacity Building to counter China's Transnational Repression in Europe

21 November 2024, [TCHRD](#)

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) conducted a seven-week long advocacy and capacity building activities aimed at countering China's transnational repression in Europe. Part of TCHRD's strategic actions to hold Chinese government accountable for spreading fear and disempowering exiled Tibetan activists and organisations, TCHRD's executive director Ms Tenzin Dawa and manager Ms Phurbu Dolma held briefings and interactions with various stakeholders including parliamentarians, policy makers, public officials, human rights experts and other civil society members on the findings of TCHRD's report on transnational repression and discussed possible solutions. Workshops on the ways to counter transnational repression were organised to build the capacity of Tibetan civil society members in six European countries.

During the three-day advocacy program at the European Parliament from 24 to 26 September, Ms. Dawa had the opportunity to brief and hand over a three-page summary of the abovementioned report's key findings and its physical copies to 15 European Union policymakers and their parliamentary assistants in Brussels. Ms Dawa highlighted transnational repression as an urgent thematic issue and explained the harassment and intimidation faced by Tibetans in Europe, emphasising the need for government institutions and law enforcement agencies to raise awareness and establish dedicated mechanisms to protect those affected by transnational repression. While participating in the Tibetan Empowerment Program organised by the International Campaign for Tibet's Europe office in Brussels from 23 to 26 September 2024, Ms. Dawa led an hour-long presentation on China's transnational repression and shared findings from TCHRD's report with workshop participants, which included Tibetan activists from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands. Ms. Dawa also shared the report's findings with representatives from the World Uyghur Congress and Amnesty International during a meeting held at the latter's office in Brussels. On 9 October in France, the TCHRD team met with the French Senate Tibet Support Group at the French Senate and held discussions with key members, including Senator Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, president of the French Tibet Support group, and executive secretary Thierry Munier.

In Switzerland on 23 October, Ms. Dawa met with Mr. Nicolas Walder, a member of Switzerland's National Council, to discuss the challenges faced by the Tibetan diaspora.

On 29 October, the TCHRD team along with Melanie Blondelle from the International Campaign for Tibet Europe held a closed-door meeting at Belgium's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels. The team advocated for increased protections for the Tibetan diaspora in Belgium. The team also engaged with Mr Stijn Willems and Mr Wannes Heirman, parliamentary assistants to MP Els Van Hoof, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, urging her office to organise hearings in the Belgian Parliament on Chinese transnational repression.

On 31 October, Ms. Dawa accompanied by Mr. Norbu Tsering, president of the Tibetan Community in the Netherlands, met with officers at the China Unit of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

In the UK, Ms. Dawa joined a virtual discussion organised by the 'Tackling Transnational Repression in the UK Working Group' on 5 November. The working group is currently working on joint policy paper submission to the UK government. Established in September 2024, the informal working group brings concerned parties together to research and monitor incidents and effects of transnational repression in the UK, support those affected by transnational repression, and identify and shape the development of a comprehensive institutional response to transnational repression in the UK.

Later that evening, MP Chris Law of the Scottish National Party hosted Ms. Dawa for a talk on China's transnational repression in the UK Parliament, attended by students, journalists, and researchers. The Labour MP for Stockport Mr Navendu Mishra also took part in the discussion and shared his thoughts. The UK-based Free Tibet organisation helped organise the talk.

Other stakeholders the TCHRD team met include Ms. Selina Morell and Ms. Caroline from the Society for Threatened Peoples with whom the team discussed transnational repression faced by Tibetans in Switzerland on 21 October. Opportunities for collaboration for an upcoming report on the issue were also explored during the discussion. Ms. Morell noted that TCHRD's capacity building workshops had enhanced awareness among Tibetans in Switzerland, many of whom were previously unaware of the extent of transnational repression.

In October, the team met with Mr. Thupten Tsering, Coordinator at the Office of Tibet in Paris and briefed him about transnational repression targeting Tibetans in France.

On 6 October, TCHRD's first awareness-raising and capacity-building workshop in Europe was held in Paris. A total of 20 participants, including members of the Paris-based Tibetan Community Association, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, and Voluntary Tibet Advocacy Group (V-TAG) attended the one-day workshop on 'Countering China's Transnational

Repression of Tibetan Diaspora Communities'. Ms. Dawa led the first session on the scope and nature of China's transnational repression, followed by Mr. Chabdak Lhamo Kyab who led a session on personal experience of China's growing transnational repression-in-exile. Mr Kyab is a writer, poet, former Tibetan parliamentarian, and Tibetan language teacher at INALCO in Paris. Mr. Hapee De Groot, Digital Protection Coordinator for Europe at Frontline Defenders, led a session on digital protection.

The workshop in Zurich on 20 October saw the participation of 40 participants from various local Tibetan organisations. Mr Eric Hsu, a researcher at the Taipei-based Doublethink Lab, led a session on 'Civil Society Best Practices for Countering Transnational Repression'. Ms. Selina Morell, China Program Manager at the Society for Threatened Peoples, discussed Switzerland's stance on transnational repression. A virtual session on resilience, well-being, and preventing burnout was conducted by TCHRD Research Director Ms. Tsering Tsomo, followed by an hour-long digital security session led by Mr. Lobsang Tseten of the Tibet Action Institute.

The workshop in Berlin on 26 October had participants from the local V-TAG group and Tibetan community association. Mr. David Missal, deputy managing director of the Tibet Initiative Deutschland, spoke on Germany's stance on transnational repression and strategies for effective engagement by local diaspora communities. Ms. Tsomo and Mr. Tseten led sessions on psychosocial well-being and digital security respectively.



*Workshop in Berlin on 26 October, with members of the local V-TAG group and Tibetan community association.*

On 3 November, the representatives of different Tibetan groups including executive members of the Tibetan community in Netherlands, V-TAG and International Campaign for Tibet Europe participated in the workshop. Mr. Michael Liu, a Ph.D. candidate at Leiden University, led a discussion on the United Front Work Department's role in perpetrating transnational repression. Other sessions included digital hygiene and psychosocial well-being.



The final workshop was held in London on 10 November with members of the Tibetan community. Ms Laura Harth, campaign director and lead on transnational repression at the Safeguard Defenders discussed developing a counter response to transnational repression. Safeguard Defenders is a human rights NGO that undertakes and supports local activities for the protection of human rights, promotion of the rule of law and enhancement of local civil society capacity in some of Asia's most hostile environments.

In September, with support from the Sydney-based Australia Tibet Council, TCHRD was able to brief and hand over a three-page summary on the major findings of the report on Chinese transnational repression to six parliamentarians: Dr Sophie Scamps (MP); Senator Jordon Steele-John, Senator Steph Hodgins-May, Senator David Shoebridge, Andrew Wallace (MP) and Senator Susan McDonald.

Ms Tsomo accompanied by the ATC's executive officer Dr Zoe Bedford also held a meeting with representatives of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in Canberra during which they presented the major findings of the TCHRD's report and answered questions. Each officer was handed with a copy of the three-page summary of the report. The AFP officers were made aware of TCHRD's upcoming initiatives to educate and inform the Tibetan community in Australia on countering TNR or foreign interference and espionage as it referred to by Australian authorities. They were urged to increase outreach efforts to community organisations and members of new developments and trends regarding Chinese efforts to infiltrate and co-opt the Tibetan community in Australia. The AFP's factsheet on countering foreign interference and espionage translated into Tibetan by TCHRD is now available on the AFP's website.

### **Tibetan leader highlights Tibet's struggle, role of global advocacy**

19 November 2024, [ANI](#)

As part of his ongoing official tour across Europe, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of Tibet's Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), addressed the Tibetan community in Barcelona and underscored the critical importance of continuing to raise global awareness about Tibet's political situation. Tsering reminded the community that, despite the immense challenges Tibet faces, the international visibility of the Tibet cause remains strong, largely due to the tireless efforts of the Dalai Lama, as per a statement by the CTA. Sikyong began by paying tribute to the Dalai Lama, noting that for over 65 years, the Dalai Lama has been the leading figure in keeping the Tibetan struggle alive

on the world stage, as per CTA. "Much of the international awareness of Tibet today is due to His Holiness' leadership, kindness, and wisdom," Sikyong said, acknowledging the Dalai Lama's pivotal role in shaping global consciousness on Tibet's plight.

One of the most significant aspects of Sikyong's address was his focus on international advocacy and the growing global recognition of Tibet's cause. He specifically highlighted recent developments such as the US government's adoption of the Tibet-China Conflict Resolution Act. This landmark legislation, which calls for a peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China issue and greater international pressure on China to respect Tibet's cultural and religious autonomy, was a key milestone in the Tibetan freedom struggle. Sikyong stressed that such successes are not the result of isolated efforts but are the product of years of tireless work by Tibetan support groups, activists, and international policymakers. Turning to the issue of dialogue with China, Sikyong expressed cautious optimism, but also tempered his comments with a realistic assessment of the current political landscape. He acknowledged that while the CTA remains committed to the Middle Way Approach--seeking genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of China--there is still uncertainty regarding the prospects for meaningful negotiations. He reiterated that the CTA's commitment to the Middle Way remains steadfast, but emphasised that Tibet's freedom struggle cannot solely rely on dialogue with the Chinese government. Today, the Tibet-China issue remains unresolved. While the Chinese government maintains strict control over Tibet, Tibetans in exile continue to advocate for their rights, including through the work of the CTA, which functions as the Tibetan government-in-exile. Despite international pressure, the Chinese government continues to reject any form of independence or autonomy for Tibet.

### **Biden publicly mentions Tibet in final meeting with China's Xi Jinping at APEC**

19 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

The outgoing US President Joe Biden on Saturday publicly referenced Tibet during his final talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, held in the presence of media on the side lines of the [Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation \(APEC\) summit](#) in Lima, Peru.

Biden highlighted the progress achieved in military communications, discussions on artificial intelligence risks, and efforts to counter narcotics during their diplomatic engagements. Reflecting on their long standing relationship, he remarked, "For over a

decade, you and I both have spent many hours together here and in China and in between. We spent a long time dealing with these issues. I think I once had to count up the number of hours you and I spent alone together. I remember being on the Tibetan plateau with you. I remember being in Beijing.”



*Outgoing US President Joe Biden meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the APEC Summit in Lima, Peru, on Nov. 16, 2024 (Photo/Reuters)*

The final scheduled meeting between outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping included discussions on maintaining “stable, healthy, and sustainable” China-U.S. relations, despite the impending transition to President-elect Donald Trump’s administration. Xi emphasised Beijing’s readiness to engage with the new leadership, stating, “China is ready to work with the new U.S. administration to maintain communication, expand cooperation, and manage differences.”

With two months remaining before Trump assumes office, U.S. officials warn of heightened risks of conflict during the transition. Trump has pledged aggressive measures, including a blanket 60% tariff on Chinese imports under his “America First” trade agenda, which Beijing firmly opposes. Additionally, Trump plans to appoint prominent China hawks to senior positions, including U.S. Senator Marco Rubio—sanctioned by China—as Secretary of State, and Representative Mike Waltz as National Security Adviser.

Other key topics during the meeting included Beijing’s military manoeuvres around Taiwan. Biden called for an end to such activities, according to a White House statement. In response, Xi criticised Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te’s alleged “‘Taiwan independence’ separatist activities,” claiming they undermine peace and stability, according to China’s foreign ministry. Beijing regards Taiwan as part of its territory, while Taiwan, a democratic nation, rejects these sovereignty claims. The U.S. remains Taiwan’s most significant supporter and arms supplier, despite lacking formal diplomatic ties.

## Parliamentary Delegation Continues Visitation Program in Arunachal Pradesh

18 November 2024, [CTA](#)



*Parliamentary Delegation Continues Visitation Program in Arunachal Pradesh*

On 14 November 2024, at 9:00 AM, a delegation of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile consisting of Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tseten and Tenzin Jigdal departed from Mon Tawang. They visited the newly constructed 108 stupas at Mandala point and then proceeded to Thubten Do-Ngag Osel Dargye Ling Monastery, founded by Kyabje Drubwang Penor Rinpoche. At the monastery, they were welcomed by the *Chakzoe* and two teachers who gave them a detailed tour and explanation of the monastery.

This Guru temple was constructed to ward off obstacles, additionally providing significant benefits, including teaching Tibetan religion and culture to local children. The Tibetan Parliament members were the first official visitors of the Parliament to conduct an inspection of this site.

In the afternoon, the two Parliament members visited Mon Dora Chenrezig Monastery. They were welcomed by the monastery’s *Chakzoe* and teachers, who served them tea and refreshments and provided a detailed introduction to the monastery.

Mon Dora Chenrezig Monastery was established after former Gaden Jangtse abbot Jetsun Lobsang Tsephel Rinpoche visited the area in 2018 for the inauguration of Dirang Monastery. Observing that the area was populated entirely by Buddhist and noticing that many

children in this remote valley faced difficulties accessing good education, he decided to establish this monastery in line with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guidance. The monastery was inaugurated on 27 October 2022.

Since then, over a hundred children annually receive education, with the former abbot personally funding all expenses including teachers' salaries, textbooks, and meals. Students take annual examinations, with top performers receiving prizes of Rs. 3,000 each, while all students receive Rs. 700 and textbooks. Additionally, Geshe scholars provide Buddhist teachings to local people during special occasions of the lunar month.

The Parliament members expressed their appreciation for the former abbot's significant contribution to spreading Tibetan religion, language, and culture in the area, following His Holiness the Dalai Lama's vision. They advised monastery officials to collaborate with the Tibetan settlement officer.

On 15 November, the two Parliament members departed for Shillong via Guwahati to continue their official tour.

### **Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Calls for Stronger Support for Tibet at India-China Relations Conference in Patna**

18 November 2024, [CTA](#)



*Tibetan Parliamentary Delegation Calls for Stronger Support for Tibet at India-China Relations Conference in Patna*

A Tibetan parliamentary delegation, consisting of Parliamentarians Tenpa Yarphel and Lupon Thupten Gyaltzen, attended a meeting titled 'Tibet Mukti Sadhana Aur Bharat-China Sambandh'. The event, organized by the India Tibet Friendship Society and the Jagjivan Ram Institute of Parliamentary Studies and Research (Patna), took place from November 16-17, 2024.

On November 16, 2024, an inaugural conference was held where the two members of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, MP Tenpa Yarphel and MP Lupon

Thupten Gyaltzen, delivered speeches on the Tibet issue.

In his address, MP Lupon Thupten Gyaltzen emphasized several key points about what India's government and people can do to support Tibet. He highlighted Tibet's historical independence, referencing the 1914 Simla Convention during British rule and Tibet's participation as an independent nation at the 1947 Asian Relations Conference in Delhi. He stressed that before Tibet's occupation by China, the Indo-Tibetan border remained peaceful and did not require military deployment. He urged the Indian public to recognize that establishing Tibet as a peaceful buffer zone between India and China would benefit both countries and promote peace across Asia and the world.

The MP also emphasized the cultural and spiritual ties between Tibet and India, pointing out that Tibetan Buddhism, which originated from ancient Indian traditions, is integral to the Himalayan region's culture. He called for increased support from India to preserve Tibetan religion and culture during these critical times, stressing India's significant role as host to the world's largest Tibetan refugee population, as well as to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

In closing, he proposed that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, one of the world's most respected leaders and a guardian of India's ancient spiritual wisdom, be awarded India's highest civilian honor, the Bharat Ratna. He argued that such an honor would bring immense pride to Tibetans, the Himalayan peoples, and his global followers.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by distinguished guests, including Dr. Sanjay Paswan, Former Union Minister; Professor Anand Kumar, Patron of the India Tibet Friendship Society; Dr. Ramachandra Purve, Former RJD President and Education Minister; Mr. Harendra Kumar, President of Bihar ITFS; and Mr. Pema Khando Bhutia, Regional Convener of CGTC-

### **Uphold Dalai Lama's values: Tibetan min**

17 November 2024, [The Tribune](#)

Education Minister Kalon, Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), yesterday urged all Tibetan students to uphold the values of the Dalai Lama and pursue education with diligence.

In her message on the occasion Children's Day, the minister stressed the importance of preserving the Tibetan language. He implored students to make the most of the unique opportunity to study and use Tibetan throughout their school years, a privilege denied to children in Tibet. She emphasised that the mastery of the language was essential not only for



their individual growth but also for the preservation of the Tibetan culture.

The minister encouraged students to approach their education holistically, through the three-fold process of learning, contemplation and meditation. "This method ensures that knowledge is not only acquired but also deeply understood and retained," she added.

The minister called for greater compassion towards students with special needs, emphasising the importance of kindness and inclusiveness. By treating others with empathy, students not only fostered a supportive environment but also developed personal qualities of compassion, aligning with the broader goals of education and the teachings of the Dalai Lama, she added.

### **Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel Launches Book on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Four Commitments**

17 November 2024, [CTA](#)

Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel launched a four-volume book on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's four principal commitments today at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA) in Gangchen Kyishong on 15 November 2024.

The books, published by researcher Kunchok Tenzin with support from the Kalsang Tibetan Traditional Art of Thangka Painting, explore His Holiness's core commitments. During the event, the speaker emphasized His Holiness's unwavering dedication to the Tibetan struggle and the welfare of the Tibetan people.

The book launch event was graced by Chief Guest Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Special Guest Secretary Lobsang Jinpa of the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and LTWA Director Geshe Lhakdor. Parliamentarians Lobsang Thupten and Tsering Lhamo also attended, along with members of the public.

Addressing the gathering, the Speaker emphasized the invaluable contributions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Tibetan struggle, his efforts in preserving and promoting Tibetan culture and religion, and his commitment to protecting Tibet's environment, among numerous other accomplishments.

Speaking about His Holiness's video message at the 8th World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet, the Speaker shared how His Holiness highlighted that supporting Tibet goes beyond a political stance—it is a commitment to truth, justice, Tibet's unique culture of non-violence, its environment, and much more.

The Speaker also noted His Holiness's establishment of reform committees aimed at creating a just society in Tibet when he assumed leadership. Reflecting on his visits to China and India in 1954 and 1956, the Speaker pointed out that His Holiness observed two very

different forms of government, with India's democratic system inspiring him to seek a similar system for Tibet. The Speaker further highlighted His Holiness's profound commitment to democracy, which included the promulgation of Tibet's future constitution, the drafting and adoption of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile, the election of the Kalon Tripa by the Tibetan people, and the complete devolution of His Holiness's political authority to the leadership of the Central Tibetan Administration.

Speaking on the shared fate of the people from the three provinces of Tibet, the Speaker emphasized His Holiness's vision of a united Tibet, encompassing all three regions, and his unwavering dedication to realizing this goal. He called for a collective effort from all Tibetans to achieve this aspiration.

The Speaker also highlighted His Holiness the Dalai Lama's immense contributions in preserving Tibet's distinct cultural heritage, beginning with the establishment of Tibetan schools upon his arrival in exile in India. He praised His Holiness for maximizing the global benefit of Tibetan Buddhism, for bridging the gap between Tibetans inside and outside Tibet, and for building a robust network of international support for Tibet. Furthermore, the Speaker spoke on the introduction of the Middle Way Approach, which was subsequently adopted unanimously by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

In closing, the Speaker commended the Kalsang Tibetan Traditional Art of Thangka Painting and its researchers for their dedicated work. He suggested that future discussions and deliberations be organized to further explore His Holiness's commitments and aspirations, offering deeper insights into his vision for Tibet and the Tibetan people.

*-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat*

### **Tibetan Sikyong testifies in Catalan parliament commission as exile parliament outreach team concludes Baltic States visit**

17 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The executive head, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) at Dharamshala, India, has on Nov 15 delivered what was stated to be a powerful testimony before an extraordinary hearing of the Commission of Foreign Affairs in the Catalan Parliament. His testimony in the parliament of the Spanish Autonomous Community set the tone for his overarching advocacy efforts across Europe over the recent past, said the CTA on its *Tibet.net* website Nov 17.

The hearing was stated to have been chaired by the Catalan Parliament deputy Francesc de Dalmaes, member of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, representing the Junts per Catalunya party.

The Tibetan Sikyong has briefed the hearing on the situation in Tibet today, highlighting the total of 157 known self-immolations by Tibetans protesting against the decades-long Chinese repression and occupation rule in their homeland.

He has explained that Tibet today is seeking autonomy, not independence, under a middle way policy envisioned decades ago by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader living in exile.

He has referred to the Resolve Tibet Act that was signed into law by US President Joe Biden on Jul 12 this year, recognizing China's armed occupation and annexation of Tibet as illegal under international law and the Tibetan people's right to self-determination, while promising active US support in countering China's disinformation on the issue of Tibet.

The Tibetan Sikyong has asked the commission to consider adopting a similar position, including a resolution on the issue of the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, aligning with the US position on the issue.

This is in view of the fact that atheist China plans to install its own "reincarnation" of the current Dalai Lama when the time comes, totally throwing into wind the Tibetan Buddhists' well-established, centuries-old, and intrinsically religious practice and procedure on this matter.

Those who attended the hearing were stated to have included several prominent deputies in the Catalan Parliament, representing leading political parties, including Ennату Domingo and Agustí Colomines from the Junts per Catalunya; Anna Balsera from the Izquierda Republicana; and Andrés García Berrio from the Commons party.

The Tibetan Sikyong was stated to have been received earlier in the day by the parliament's President Josep Rull and parliamentary board members Glòria Freixa i Vilardell and Juli Fernandez Olivares.

Rull, in his remarks, has honoured the courage and determination of the Tibetan people and expressed solidarity with them as they continued to remain subjected to deteriorating human rights situation under the Chinese occupation rule.

The Tibetan Sikyong has afterwards visited the Blanquerna University to give a special talk on the human rights situation in Tibet, hosted by the International Relations Degree Director Onno Seroo. It witnessed an impressive turnout of students from international relations, law and across disciplines, along with professors and heads of global organizations, the report said.

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Meanwhile, the delegation of Geshe Lhampa Gowo Lobsang Phende and Wangdue Dorjee from the Tibetan Parliament in Exile has concluded its Tibet advocacy tour of the Baltic States in Estonia on Nov 14.

The delegation's concluding day programme began with a meeting in the parliament building of Estonia, organized by Juku-Kalle Raid, the Chair of the Tibet Support Group in the Estonian Parliament and member of the Estonia's Foreign Affairs Commission. Those who attended it included MPs Henn Põlluaas, Kalle Laanet, Jüri Jaanson, Tõnis Lukas, and Tarmo Tamm, said another *Tibet.net* report Nov 17.

The Tibetan outreach and advocacy delegates were stated to have provided an update on the current critical situation in Tibet and were assured continued support for the Tibetan cause by the MPs.

They have also spoken to the high school students of Tallinna Reaalkool (Tallinn Secondary School of Science) and met with Ardi Hilpus, who had served as Estonian diplomat in Germany, Norway, Iceland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Russia.

The delegation's visit to the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia concluded with a dinner with three Estonian parliamentarians and the Chair of the Tibet Support Group.

### Chinese officials counter Tibetan diplomatic efforts in EU with propaganda tour

17 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundop



Two Tibetan parliamentarians with the Speaker of the Latvian Parliament. Also seen is official from the Office of Tibet in London (Photo/tibet.net)

In an apparent response to recent Tibetan diplomatic initiatives, Chinese state-backed "Tibetologists" have launched a European tour to promote Beijing's narrative on Tibet.

The delegation, organized by the Chinese State Council Information Office (SCIO), visited Latvia and Estonia between November 7-13, 2024, coinciding with visits by Tibetan parliamentarians to the same countries.

According to *International Campaign for Tibet*, the Chinese delegation's tour appears strategically timed to counter growing support for Tibet in the Baltic region. Earlier this year, the Estonian Parliament hosted a hearing on "The Legal Status of Tibet," attended by 35 MPs and featuring testimony from

Tibetan political leader Penpa Tsering. Experts at the hearing challenged China's historical claims over Tibet, with Professor Hon-Shiang Lau noting that Chinese imperial records never documented Tibet as part of China.

The propaganda push follows several diplomatic victories for the Tibetan exile government, including Penpa Tsering's meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in May 2024. China has recently intensified its external propaganda efforts, launching the "Tibet International Communication Center" in Lhasa on September 2, 2024, as part of a broader strategy to reshape international perspectives on Tibet.

Political scientist Anne-Marie Brady characterizes the (SCIO) State Council Information Office as an extension of China's foreign propaganda office, highlighting Beijing's systematic approach to controlling the global narrative around Tibet rather than addressing underlying political issues.

SCIO has remained consistently engaged in propagating the Chinese narrative on Tibet. It orchestrated a series of 'Forums on the Development of Tibet,' with the first event in the series held in the Austrian capital of Vienna in 2007. The second was held in the Italian capital Rome in 2009, and the third was held in the Greek capital of Athens in 2011. Since the fourth forum, which was held in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 2014 (the fifth and sixth were also in Lhasa in 2016 and 2019, the seventh in Beijing in 2023), the Tibet Autonomous Region has also been named as a co-organizer.

### **Tibetan Women's Association hosts tour in Dharamshala to highlight the plight of children, environment**

16 November 2024, [India Blooms](#)

#### **Tibetan Women's Association hosted an appealing tour from the north Indian city of Dharamshala on Thursday to highlight 'alarming situation for Tibetan children and the environment in Tibet.'**

Tibetan women activists are going to Delhi on three bikes and the six-day journey started on Indian Children's Day and will end on November 20, World Children's Day, ANI reported.

An activist told the news agency: "We are organising this appeal tour from Dharamshala to Delhi and it is a six-day tour."

"We are starting it today on Indian Children's Day and will end in Delhi on the 20th of November, on World Children's Day," the activist told ANI.

**"We are appealing to all Indians to help us to stop colonial boarding schools in China," the activist further said.**

Tenzin Yingsel, project officer of TWA told ANI, "Today we have gathered here to start an appeal tour which starts today on November 14 which is Children's Day across India to November 20 which is celebrated as universal Children's Day to highlight the alarming situation for Tibetan children and environment of Tibet."

Yingsel said Tibetan children are forced by Chinese authorities to learn Mandarin.

According to reports, nearly one million Tibetan children, who are currently a part of the government-run colonial boarding schools, are taught Mandarin language and are deprived of learning the primary language.

**" When we talk about children we talk about Tibet's environment also. Tibet is the highest and the largest plateau of Asia and it's the roof of the world it is the origin of seven major rivers of Asia and the situation regarding the environment is a matter of great concern for all the downstream countries including India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan."** Yingsel said.

"Due to the large number of damming and illegal mining, it is causing harm to ecological balance. So we are organizing this event to make the people aware of the situation," Yingsel added.

### **Tibetans, Uyghurs welcome China-sanctioned Rubio for US Secretary of State**

16 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The nomination by President-elect Donald Trump of Senator Marco Rubio as the top US diplomat has been welcomed by Tibetan and Uyghur activists on account of his track-record of being a harsh critic of China for its human rights record.

Rubio was named by Trump on Nov 13 as his choice to replace Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who has served through President Joe Biden's nearly four years in office. Considered a longtime foreign policy "hawk" when it comes to the Communist Party of China-government, Rubio's appointment is less controversial compared to those of several other prominent nominees of Trump who takes the presidency from Biden, come Jan 2025.

Son of Cuban migrants, Rubio would be the first sitting US Secretary of State to have been sanctioned by the Chinese government, noted *rfa.org* Nov 15.

China blacklisted Rubio on Mar 18, 2021 in retaliation for US sanctions on Chinese officials involved in the genocide of the Uyghurs and the crackdown in Hong Kong. This means, from among other things, that he is barred from visiting China.

While welcoming his nomination, Namgyal Choedup, representative of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration in North America, has struck a note of caution. He believes it is too soon to say a State

Department led by Rubio could lead to tangible change for Tibetans, though the nominee's sincerity to do the right thing is indubitable.

"Senator Rubio's deep understanding of Tibetan issues, his strong stance on Tibet and his significant role in sponsoring and advocating for two key Tibet-related acts passed by the US government are commendable," Choedup has said.

"While it is still too early to determine the exact impact he will have on Tibet, his unwavering support for the Tibetan cause is clear," the Tibetan envoy has added.

"With the new administration in place, we remain cautious, but we are optimistic, as the US government, Congress, and the American people have long been strong allies of Tibet," Choedup has added.

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Referring to Rubio's track record on supporting Tibet, the report noted that in 2018, he co-sponsored the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which denies entry into the United States to Chinese officials who prohibit American citizens from entering Tibet.

He was also stated to have pushed for the Tibet Policy and Support Act. Passed by the US Congress on Dec 18, 2020, the act says any decision about the Dalai Lama's reincarnation rests solely with the Dalai Lama himself and the broader Tibetan community – and not with Beijing, which is seeking to install its own successor.

It also requires the US President to designate a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, whose role is to advocate for Tibet and ensure the US engages on issues affecting Tibetans.

Rubio was particularly vocal in his criticism of China on its genocidal Uyghur policy and actions.

"Marco Rubio has been a steadfast advocate for human rights, particularly for the Uyghur people enduring ongoing genocide," Rushan Abbas, the executive chair of the Munich-based World Uyghur Congress, has said, noting his "leadership role" in Congress passing the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act and Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

"His advocacy has helped in holding Chinese officials committing Uyghur genocide accountable, highlighted Uyghur prisoners of conscience, protected American markets from Uyghur forced labor and defended religious freedom," Abbas has said.

### Seeking to counter Tibetan outreach, China sends propaganda team to Europe

15 November 2024, [ICT](#)

Tibetan parliamentarians have been busy in Europe this month, where they've working to garner support for Tibet with visits to Latvia and Estonia, among other countries.

As it turns out, they aren't alone. The Chinese government has sent a team of state-supported

"Tibetologists" to spread Chinese propaganda in European countries in an effort to counter recent visits by leaders from the Central Tibetan Administration.

#### Beijing's propaganda team

Chinese state media reported that a group of "Tibetologists" visited Latvia from November 7 to 10 and Estonia from November 10 to 13, 2024. Organized by the Chinese State Council Information Office (SCIO), the group spoke about the "development achievements of Tibet in China in the new era, and the development results of education, medical care, ecological environment protection and other developments shared by the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet."

It is no coincidence that the visit by the delegation from China overlapped with the visit to Latvia and Estonia by a group of Tibetan parliamentarians from Dharamsala to these countries. Tibetan Parliamentarians Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Phende and Wangdue Dorjee were in Latvia during which they met the Speaker of the Latvian Parliament, Daiga Mieriņa, as well as MPs on Nov. 13, 2024. Currently, several Tibetan parliamentarians are visiting different countries in Europe.

The Chinese government is likely perturbed by the continuing support for Tibet among the Baltic countries. Political scientist Anne-Marie Brady, who specializes in Chinese domestic and foreign politics, contends that the State Council Information Office is just another name for the Chinese Office of Foreign Propaganda.

SCIO has remained consistently engaged in propagating the Chinese narrative on Tibet. It orchestrated a series of 'Forums on the Development of Tibet,' with the first event in the series held in the Austrian capital of Vienna in 2007. The second was held in the Italian capital Rome in 2009, and the third was held in the Greek capital of Athens in 2011. Since the fourth forum, which was held in the Tibetan capital Lhasa in 2014 (the fifth and sixth were also in Lhasa in 2016 and 2019, the seventh in Beijing in 2023), the Tibet Autonomous Region has also been named as a co-organizer.

#### Expert testimony

China would have been concerned that in January 2024, a hearing titled the "The Legal Status of Tibet" was held in the Estonian Parliament and attended by 35 Estonian MPs. During the hearing, Tibetan political leader Sikyong (Political leader in exile) Penpa Tsering testified in order to "give historical context to the Tibetan narrative, Middle-Way Approach and the importance of correcting historical facts of Tibet's independence before its invasion by the People Republic of China."

Two other people who testified at the hearing were Professor Hon-Shiang Lau, a research scholar of



Chinese history who retired from the City University of Hong Kong; and Dr Michael van Walt van Praag, expert in intrastate conflict resolution and international law. Professor Lau explained that – contrary to Chinese Communist Party claims on Tibet – Chinese imperial records, whether from the Chinese Ming dynasty or the Manchu Qing dynasty, never recorded Tibet as part of China. Dr. Michael van Walt van Praag informed the parliamentarians why “China has been looking to buy the legitimacy of its occupation of Tibet by insisting on its trading partner governments to declare ‘Tibet as an internal issue of China’ as a justification for denying Tibetan people the right to self-determination,” and explained how this position breaches international law.

Dharamsala’s official report said the “Estonian media gave the event excellent coverage’ to the hearing and the Sikyong’s visit.

Sikyong had also visited Latvia and on January 29, 2024 strategized with the Latvian Parliamentary Support Group for Tibet, while Estonian parliamentary delegations have also visited the Tibetan exiled leadership in Dharamsala as a visible symbol of their support.

Juku-Kalle Raid, the Chair of Tibet Support Group in Estonian Parliament, led a delegation to Dharamsala to participate in the 64th anniversary of Tibetan Democracy Day on September 2, 2024, and also read a message for the day from the Speaker of the Estonian Parliament. Raid had also led an Estonian parliamentary delegation to Dharamsala on April 25, 2024, and Tibet Support Group participating in the 35th birthday celebrations of the 11th Panchen Lama (under detention by China) during which he said, “The people of Estonia have consistently shown a deep admiration and affection for Tibet, and this enduring sentiment will continue to prevail.”

#### **Battle over perception**

China also sent similar “Tibetologists” groups to France and Norway at the end of September 2024. The visit to France by the Chinese officials was certainly connected to the meeting that Sikyong Penpa Tsering had with French President Emmanuel Macron on May 1, 2024. Sikyong had presented an autographed photo from the Dalai Lama to President Macron.

China’s Tibet policy has been a subject of international scrutiny ever since its invasion and subsequent occupation of Tibet in 1959. The Chinese government knows that there is a political problem in Tibet. But rather than working to peacefully resolve it, one of its approaches is to falsify the situation and employ various methods to control the narrative around Tibet, aiming to reshape its portrayal in global discourse.

Xi Jinping emphasized early in his tenure the importance of external propaganda in shaping China’s global image and narrative. On Aug. 19, 2013, during his address to the National Propaganda and Ideology

Work Conference, Xi advocated for “innovation” in China’s external propaganda efforts, promoting the idea of effectively “telling China’s story.”

ICT expects further escalation by China in the future in an attempt to dominate the global conversation with China’s propagandistic narrative and storytelling. A new propaganda center called the “Tibet International Communication Center” was launched in Lhasa on September 2, 2024, marking a significant step in China’s ongoing campaign to reshape international public opinion on Tibet. TAR Party Secretary Wang Junzheng instructed resource integration and optimization of the external propaganda system and mechanisms to “build a foreign discourse system and narrative system related to Tibet” in accordance with the CCP central leadership’s order.

#### **Education Kalon Highlights Urgent Need to Preserve Tibetan Language in Her Children’s Day Message**

14 November 2024, [CTA](#)

As schools across India celebrate Children’s Day today, Kalon (Minister) Tharlam Dolma Changra of the Department of Education, CTA, extended her heartfelt greetings to all Tibetan students, encouraging them to uphold the values of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to pursue education with diligence.



*(File image) Education Kalon Highlights Urgent Need to Preserve Tibetan Language in Her Children’s Day Message*

In her message for the occasion, the Education Kalon stressed the importance of preserving the Tibetan language and implored students to make the most of the unique opportunity to study and use Tibetan throughout their school years— a privilege denied to Tibetan children in Tibet. She emphasized that mastery of the language is essential not only for individual growth but also for the preservation of Tibetan culture.

Additionally, the Kalon encouraged students to approach their education holistically, through the three-fold process of learning, contemplation, and meditation. This method ensures that knowledge is not only acquired but deeply understood and retained.

The Kalon also called for greater compassion toward students with special needs, emphasising the importance of kindness and inclusivity. By treating others with empathy, students not only foster a supportive environment but also develop personal qualities of compassion, aligning with the broader goals of education and the teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

### Red-House Indie Film Festival to feature documentary 'Un-titled' on Tibetans in exile

14 November 2024, [ANI](#)

The Red House is presenting the second edition of the Red-House Indie Film Festival (RIFF), a three-day celebration of independent filmmaking. From November 15-17, RIFF will showcase a diverse range of films from emerging and established independent filmmakers across the country, from all over the country with distinct voices and bold new ideas to showcase their films. On the second day of the festival, November 16, a documentary named Un-titled, will be shown. Directed by Syed Ahmad Rufai and filmed in McLeod Ganj, the documentary explores the displacement of Tibetans from their homeland and their establishment of a government-in-exile in India, highlighting their resilience and resistance through poetry.

Notably, Tibet's struggle for autonomy remains a complex issue. Since China invaded Tibet in 1950 and its subsequent incorporation into the People's Republic of China, the region has faced sweeping changes in governance and society. Tibetan leaders, including the Dalai Lama, have consistently called for greater autonomy, citing threats of cultural erosion, religious restrictions, and human rights violations. Earlier on November 8, Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), urged Tibetans in exile to deepen their historical understanding of Tibet and its current challenges in order to strengthen their connection to the Tibetan cause.

He addressed people at the Kalimpong Tibetan settlement during his ongoing tour to engage with Tibetan communities and emphasised the importance of recognising Tibet's geopolitical significance, particularly its vital river systems and environmental challenges.

During his visit, Sikyong addressed students and highlighted the critical role of Tibet's history in shaping the community's struggle for autonomy. He noted the need for Tibetans to cultivate a stronger bond with their heritage and culture to preserve their identity amid mounting challenges. Sikyong also visited key Tibetan institutions, including the Tibetan Mentseekhang, the Tibetan Old Age

Home, and the Kalimpong Tibetan Opera Association. At a gathering of approximately 200 Tibetan residents, he reflected on the community's journey into exile, honouring the sacrifices of past generations and acknowledging the role of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in establishing Tibetan settlements and schools in India.

### Exile Tibetan parliament members interact with Lithuanian, Latvian lawmakers, others in advocacy drive

14 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

A delegation of two members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPIE) held a series of meetings with lawmakers and other Tibet supporters in the Baltic states of Lithuania and Latvia over Nov 11 and 13, including with the Speaker of Latvia's Saeima, to garner support for a host of grave issues, said the TPIE in a *Tibet.net* report Nov 12-14.

The delegates, Geshe Lharampa Gowo Lobsang Pende and Mr Wangdue Dorjee, have raised awareness about the Chinese government's ongoing repression of Tibetan religious freedom and the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and culture, and sought support for bringing an end to these repressions.

Following their initial arrival in Vilnius on Nov 10, the delegates held a breakfast meeting with Mr Dainius Zalimas, Member of the European Parliament and former President of the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania, on the following day. Zalimas has expressed unwavering commitment to advocating for Tibet, despite the challenging political climate.

Zalimas has also committed to do his best to help establish the Tibet Intergroup in the European Parliament by working with like-minded MEPs. He has also promised assistance to the local Tibet Support Group in organising Tibet awareness events locally.

On the following day, the delegation has met with members of the Lithuanian Parliamentary Group for Relations with Tibet. The visit coincided with the period of political transition in the country following the recent general elections with a new parliament and a potential change in government. The outgoing chair of the group, Mr Andrius Navickas, has presided over the last meeting of the group in the outgoing parliament, which was held with the presence of the Tibetan visitors.

The MPs who attended it have also included Arunas Valinskas and Matas Maldeikis, both of whom were re-elected, and outgoing members Kestutis Navickas (former Minister for Agriculture) and Monica Navickiene.

Navickas has expressed hope that the group would be re-established in the new parliament with Arunas Valinskas at the helm while assuring full cooperation

from the outgoing members. Valinskas has assured his continued support for Tibet for the next four years of the new parliament's term.

At the meeting, Professor Vytis Vidunas, Director of the House of Tibet, has recalled His Holiness the Dalai Lama's first visit to Lithuania with much gratitude and appreciation.

Professor Vidunas and Robertas Mazeika from the local Tibet Support Group have accompanied the TPIE members to the Tibet Square – a symbol of Lithuanian solidarity with the Tibetan people. The square was opened in 2010 with a blessing by His Holiness the Dalai Lama during his visit there. His Holiness last visited the square in 2018 and planted a tree to symbolise the friendship between the peoples of Lithuania and Tibet.

Arriving in Latvia's capital Riga on Nov 13, the TPIE delegation has met with the Speaker of the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, Daiga Mieriņa, as well as Juris Viļums, Chair of the Group for the Support of Tibet in the Saeima, and Aleksandrs Kiršteins, another MP.

### **Tibet Information Office Participates in seminar hosted by the Chinese Alliance for Democracy**

13 November 2024, [CTA](#)

A two-day seminar hosted by the International Chinese Alliance for Democracy at the University of Sydney from 9 November brought together prominent Chinese democratic figures, scholars, and Taiwanese leaders to explore the potential role of Taiwan's democratic model in inspiring democratic movements within mainland China. The event also featured the participation of Dawa Sangmo, the Chinese Liaison Officer of the Tibet Information Office (also called the Office of Tibet).

Moderated by Dr Jingjing Zhong, Chairman of the Chinese Alliance for Democracy Australia, the seminar aimed to not only discuss democratic ideals but also develop practical strategies for uniting pro-democracy forces towards a common objective.

The chief guest Wang Dan, a prominent leader of the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy movement, delivered a powerful address on the importance of strengthening the Chinese democratic movement. He outlined six key strategies for achieving this goal, which included building a strong support base, engaging more actively in local and national politics, and fostering unity among pro-democracy forces. He also commented on Sino-Tibet relations, expressing admiration for the Tibetan government-in-exile and suggesting that Chinese democrats could learn valuable lessons from the Central Tibetan Administration's governance strategies.

In her talk titled "Sino-Tibet Civil Friendship and Its Path Forward," Chinese Liaison Officer Dawa Sangmo

acknowledged Taiwan's democracy as a potential model for democratic reform in China. However, she emphasised the need for deeper collaboration between Chinese democrats and Tibetans, advancing their partnership to a "2.0 level." Given the close geographical and historical ties between China and Tibet, she argued that it is crucial to recognise Tibet's historical independence and its current status as an occupied territory. She also emphasised the support for the Middle Way Policy as a means to foster peaceful coexistence, advocating for mutual respect and constructive dialogue between the two regions.

The seminar was also attended by Chinese democrats from the US, including Liqun Chen, Vice Chairman of the Democratic Party of China National Committee; Xinmin Qing, Vice Chairman and Secretary-General of the International Chinese Alliance for Democracy; and Xiuhong Jing, Chairman of the Chinese Democracy & Human Rights Alliance. and it underscored a unified agreement on continued cooperation between democratic forces.

### **Asian Buddhist Summit 2024 Focuses on Strengthening Asia Through Buddhism**

13 November 2024, [CTA](#)

Under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) hosted the First Asian Buddhist Summit 2024, themed "*Role of Buddhism in Strengthening Asia*". The two-day summit was held at the Ashok Hotel in New Delhi from 5 to 6 November 2024. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's written message for the summit was read by Ven. Shartse Khensur Jangchup Choeden, Secretary General of the International Buddhist Confederation.

The summit was inaugurated by Smt. Droupadi Murmu, the Honorable President of India, who attended as the chief guest. She was joined by Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Union Minister of Culture, and Shri Kiren Rijiju, Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs. Their presence underscored the Indian government's commitment to fostering interfaith dialogue and exchange.

Mr. Tenzin Lekshay, Official Spokesperson and Additional Secretary of International Relations, Department of Information and International Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration, delivered a presentation on Tibetan Buddhism, elaborating on its historical and spiritual significance, and its continued relevance in today's world. He also discussed the teachings and global impact of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, emphasizing His messages of Buddhist values, science, and religion.

The summit saw the participation of many revered Buddhist leaders, including His Eminence Menri Trizin



Rinpoché, Kyabje Ling Choktrul Rinpoche, Kyabje Kundeling Rinpoche, Venerable Mingyur Rinpoche, Venerable Yangten Rinpoche among others. Many senior monks, abbots, and spiritual heads from a wide array of Buddhist traditions across Asia attended the summit and, engaged in discussions on Buddhism’s potential to address contemporary global challenges. Throughout the two-day event, key discussions focused on the role of Buddhism in promoting social harmony, ecological sustainability, and fostering interfaith dialogue, all crucial in the context of Asia’s diverse and complex societies.

The Asian Buddhist Summit 2024 underscored the importance of continuing the dialogue on Buddhism’s role in strengthening the cultural, spiritual, and socio-political ties within Asia, with a focus on sharing wisdom for a peaceful future.

In total, the summit attracted over 700 attendees, including Buddhist leaders, monks, scholars, educators, and practitioners, reflecting the deep interest in Buddhist teachings as a force for peace and unity in the region.

### China-linked group hacked Tibetan media and university sites to distribute Cobalt Strike payload

13 November 2024, [The Record Media](#), Daryna Antoniuk

A China-linked state hacker group has compromised Tibetan media and university websites in a new espionage campaign, researchers have found — part of a series of attacks targeting the Tibetan community in order to collect intelligence for Beijing.

The websites of the digital news outlet Tibet Post and Gyudmed Tantric University were hacked in late May and remain compromised as of the time of writing. Researchers at Recorded Future’s Insikt Group track the group behind the activity as TAG-112.

The Record is an editorially independent unit of Recorded Future.

According to a new Insikt Group report, TAG-112 has several overlaps with another Chinese state-sponsored group, Evasive Panda, which has been [described](#) as “highly skilled and aggressive.”

Evasive Panda is also interested in targeting the Tibetan community and previously compromised the Tibet Post. Both threat actors have also manipulated hacked websites to prompt visitors to download a malicious file disguised as a “security certificate.”

Despite these similarities, Insikt Group analysts believe TAG-112 is a separate hacker group, as it lacks Evasive Panda’s sophistication and hasn’t deployed custom malware. Instead, the group used Cobalt Strike, a legitimate cybersecurity tool designed to help security professionals simulate cyberattacks. The

Cobalt Strike Beacon payload has been widely adopted by hackers to carry out real attacks.

TAG-112 is likely a subgroup of Evasive Panda, working toward the same or similar intelligence requirements, researchers said.

Both websites compromised by the group were “almost certainly” built with the Joomla content management system (CMS), which “if not maintained and updated... become[s] an easy target for cyber threat actors,” the researchers said. The group likely exploited a vulnerability in the websites to upload the malicious code.

The Tibetan community in exile, along with other ethnic minority groups in China, has long been a target for various Chinese cyber-espionage groups. Beijing perceives these groups as subversive or separatist elements challenging the Chinese Communist Party.

It is highly likely that both TAG-112 and Evasive Panda will continue their targeting of ethnic, religious, and human rights-linked organizations that operate in or have a nexus to China, researchers said.

Earlier in March, Tibetans were [targeted](#) with corrupted language translation software in a cyber-espionage campaign linked to Evasive Panda. The attack affected Tibetans living in India, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, and the U.S.

### 10th Young Tibetan Researchers Conference Held at Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi

11 November 2024, [CTA](#)



10th Young Tibetan Researchers Conference Held at Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi

The 10th Young Tibetan Researchers Conference was held for three days from November 9-11, 2024, at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies (CIHTS) in Varanasi, organised by the Tibet Policy Institute. This marks the first time the Tibet Policy Institute has organised the Young Tibetan Researchers Conference at CIHTS Varanasi. Over thirty young researchers are presenting and discussing their findings on topics spanning from Tibetan religion, ancient and modern history, anthropology and epigraphy, politics and

society, grammar and literature, education and development, environment, and the exile community, showcasing diverse facets of Tibetan culture.

The chief guest at the inaugural ceremony was Prof. Lobsang Tenzin Raktoe, representing the Vice-Chancellor of CIHTS, along with Secretary Dawa Tsering, Director of the Tibet Policy Institute; Joint Secretary Tempa Gyaltzen Zamlha, Deputy Director; Prof. Jampa Samten of CIHTS; Prof. Tsewang Topla of Sarah College; Assistant Professor Lhakpa Tsering of CIHTS Tibetan Language Department; Geshe Lobsang Ngodrup, Head of Tibetan Studies Department at Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education, Bangalore; Assistant Professor Lhamo Tso from Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education, Bangalore; and over thirty other researchers and observers.

In his welcome speech, Tibet Policy Institute Director Dawa Tsering highlighted that the conference's primary goal was to address the limited participation of exiled Tibetans in international discussions on Tibet, in contrast to China's active presence at Tibetan studies conferences. He noted that China employs over 2,000 so-called Tibetan studies experts, who misinterpret history to claim Tibet as part of China and assert that Tibetan religion and culture originated in China. Secretary Dawa emphasised the need for meaningful discussions and scholarly publications on these critical topics.

The chief guest commended the Tibet Policy Institute for organising a conference that gathered many young Tibetan researchers, emphasising the importance of studying not only Tibet's past but also its future direction—examining Tibet's past, present, and future as a whole. He remarked on Tibet's precarious current situation compared to its history, noting that Tibet's continued existence and its religion and culture's relevance in academia are largely due to collective resilience.

During his opening remarks, Deputy Director Zamlha Tempa Gyaltzen noted that the 25 researchers presenting at the three-day conference represented institutions including CIHTS Varanasi, Sarah College of Higher Tibetan Studies, Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education in Bangalore, Tibet Policy Institute, and Nepal. Additionally, four invited experts were present to provide guidance: Dawa Tsering, Director of Tibet Policy Institute, Prof. Jampa Samten, Prof. Tsewang Topla, and Assistant Professor Lhakpa Tsering. He announced that the conference would feature a special session on developing unified research methodologies for both traditional and modern Tibetan studies, along with a dedicated session addressing China's use of the term "Xizang" for Tibet. The event will conclude with guided tours of some historical sites in the area.

*-Report filed by Tibet Policy Institute, CTA*

## **Tibetan Delegates Highlight Derge Dam Concerns on First Day of COP29 UN Climate Summit**

11 November 2024, [CTA](#)

At COP29, the global climate summit that kicked off today in Baku, Tibetan representatives Dechen Palmo and Dhondup Wangmo are bringing much-needed attention to environmental concerns in Tibet. Representing the region's interests, they highlighted the potential ecological impacts of the Derge Dam project, a hydropower initiative poised to alter the landscape of the Driчу River and affect downstream communities reliant on its waters.

On the first day of COP29, Tibetan environmental researcher Dechen Palmo and Dhondup Wangmo launched a campaign to raise awareness of the environmental and cultural risks posed by the Derge Dam project. They distributed a brochure titled "Say No to the Derge Dam Project in Tibet: Protect the Driчу River, Community, and Heritage from Destruction" to attendees, government representatives, and environmental organisations.

The brochure outlines potential impacts of the dam on the Driчу River, which holds not only ecological significance but also cultural value for local communities in Tibet. "Our goal is to build support for the protection of the Driчу River and to prevent irreversible damage to Tibet's natural and cultural heritage," Dechen explained.

Dechen Palmo and Dhondup Wangmo's schedule at COP29 includes participation in government meetings, side events and visits to government offices and country pavilions. The delegates are focused on raising awareness about Tibet's vulnerable ecosystem, emphasising the urgency of addressing the impacts of hydropower development on the Tibetan plateau.

"The Derge Dam project is not just a local issue; it is part of a broader pattern impacting regional water security and biodiversity," Dhondup Wangmo stated. "We're here to advocate for sustainable approaches that respect both Tibet's unique environment and the people who depend on it."

By attending various discussions at different pavilions and government offices, the Tibetan delegation aims to foster international support for policies that protect Tibet's rivers and fragile ecosystem. With the Derge Dam at the heart of their advocacy, the delegates' presence at COP29 underscores Tibet's role as a critical water source and a frontline region in the struggle for climate resilience.

Through this publication and discussions at COP29's side events and pavilions, Palmo and Wangmo are advocating for sustainable alternatives and international cooperation to safeguard Tibet's environment and its vital water sources.

*-Report filed by Tibetan Policy Institute, CTA*

## Vietnamese Buddhist Sangha meets Dalai Lama, with invite for Vesak celebrations next year

11 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

A delegation of top Vietnamese Buddhist leaders led by Ven Thich Tam Tri, Member of the Supreme Patriarch Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (VBS), has called on the Dalai Lama at his exile residence in Dharamshala, India, on Nov 8. And it asked him to send representatives of Tibetan Buddhism to attend Vesak, the most significant Buddhist festival, in May 2025 in Vietnam, reported the ANI news service Nov 10.

The VBS is the only Buddhist sangha recognised by the Vietnamese government.

“We requested his Holiness to send a delegation from Tibetan Buddhism from Dharamshala to attend an important Buddhist event to be hosted by Sangha from 6th to 8th of May next year and he has approved our proposal,” Ven Thich Nhat Tu, Vice President of VBS and Vice-Chancellor of Vietnam Buddhist University, has said.

He has further said: “We also requested his Holiness to authorise a Tibetan master to sign an MoU with VBS for long life cooperation between Tibetan and Vietnamese Buddhist. Apart from this we also requested him to allow us to translate some of his books so that Tibetan Buddhism can be read and viewed by more and more people in Vietnam and then we also requested him to live a long life for the benefit of people around the world.”

The 45-member Vietnamese Buddhist delegation visited Dharamshala after attending the Asian Buddhist Conference in Delhi last week.

Vesak, the day of the full moon in the month of May, is the most sacred day to millions of Buddhists around the world. It was on the day of Vesak two and a half millennia ago, in the year 623 BC, that the Buddha was born. It was also on the day of Vesak that the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was on the day of Vesak that the Buddha in his eightieth year passed away, the report noted, citing the United Nations.

The delegation was earlier received by the Secretary and Additional Secretary of the Department of Religion and Culture of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) at the Kangra Airport at Gaggal on Nov 7 and visited the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives and Tibet Museum in the CTA complex.

The other members of the delegation were stated to included Ven Thich Tam Duc, Deputy Director of Vietnam Buddhist Research Institute and Executive Committee member of VBS; Ven Thích Bổn Đạt, President of Vietnamese Buddhist Association in Canada; Ven Thich Le Nguyen, President of Vietnamese Buddhist Association in UK; Ven Dr Thich Dong Thanh, Vice-Chancellor of Buddhist University in

Hue City, Vietnam; Ven Dr Thich Giac Hiep; Ven Ngo Tri Vien, member of VBS; Bikkhuni Dr Dieu Hieu, Deputy Head of Pali Department at Vietnam Buddhist University; and Bikkhuni Dr Giac Le Hieu, Abbess of Vietnamese Temple in Korea.

## Sikyong Penpa Tsering Visits Tibetan Institutions in Kalimpong, Addresses Tibetans on Key Issues Concerning Tibet

11 November 2024, [CTA](#)



As part of his ongoing official visits to Tibetan settlements in exile, Sikyong Penpa Tsering visited Tibetan establishments in Kalimpong Tibetan settlement on 8 November 2024.

Sikyong kicked off his day-long engagement with visitations to Sed-Gyued Monastery and Zhekar Choede Monastery, followed by an address at the Sambhota Tibetan School, Kalimpong.

After a brief introductory opening by the school's Principal, Tsering Tsomo, Sikyong advised students to learn about Tibet's past histories and current status to reconnect themselves with the Tibet cause. Having said that, Sikyong shared his insights about the geopolitical status of the Tibetan plateau and the major roles that Tibet's river system plays in the livelihoods of riparian Asian communities. Sikyong further spoke about the environmental challenges that have disturbed the Tibetan plateau's fragile ecosystem.

Sikyong also held a Q&A session with the student before wrapping up his address.

Thereafter, Sikyong headed to Gaden Tharpa Choeling and Tsechen Thinley Dhargyeling monastery to pay obeisance. At the same time, he also toured the monastery's museum.

Later that afternoon, Sikyong visited the local Tibetan Mentseekhang branch, the local Tibetan Old Age Home, and the Kalimpong Tibetan Opera Association before addressing the gathering of around 200 Tibetan residents at the Mani Lhakhang.

In his address, Sikyong Penpa Tsering reflected on the Tibetan community's journey into exile, highlighting the efforts of the older generation and detailing how His Holiness the Dalai Lama, with the assistance from

Indian Prime Minister Nehru, established Tibetan settlements and schools in India. He also discussed how His Holiness' travels to Asia in 1967 and Europe in 1973 led to the development of the Middle Way Approach, a concept rooted in concerns for Tibet's survival and cultural preservation, particularly following the destruction wrought by China's Cultural Revolution.

The Sikyong then traced the evolution of the Middle Way, noting His Holiness's presentation of the Five-Point Peace Plan to the U.S. Congress in 1979, with an emphasis on Sino-Tibetan dialogue. In 1988, His Holiness further articulated this approach during his address to the European Parliament, which became a turning point for the Tibetan exile community. The Sikyong emphasised that the Middle Way Approach continues to guide the community's efforts toward a peaceful resolution, aligned with His Holiness' vision for Tibet's future.

Sikyong Penpa Tsering emphasised the importance of Tibetans understanding their history and staying informed about the critical situation in Tibet, where increasing Chinese restrictions have strained family relationships and reduced the number of Tibetans leaving for exile since 2008. This has had a negative impact on Tibetan monasteries and schools in the diaspora. He also expressed concern about the broader geopolitical context, noting China's weakened economic position post-pandemic and rising youth unemployment, which could present opportunities for Tibet's advocacy.

The Sikyong highlighted the 16th Kashag's strategy of engaging with global allies, including Uyghurs, Southern Mongolians, Hong Kong activists, Chinese pro-democrats, and Taiwanese, to strengthen Tibet's international appeal. He stressed that advocating for Tibet in isolation is ineffective, and a united front attracts more global attention. Finally, he warned that without a deep understanding of their history, Tibetans risk losing their cultural identity and the legacy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's efforts, urging the community to prioritise this knowledge for future generations.

### **Tibetan MPs meet Czech lawmakers to discuss Tibet's struggles under Chinese rule**

10 November 2024, [ANI](#)

Tibetan Members of Parliament, Youdon Aukatsang and Tsering Lhamo held a series of significant meetings in Prague with Czech lawmakers and diplomats to raise awareness about Tibet's struggles under Chinese governance.

The high-level discussions focused on critical issues faced by Tibetans, such as the Chinese government's control over residential schools, the closures

of Tibetan monastic and private schools, and the sensitive matter of Dalai Lama's reincarnation, an official press release by the Tibetan Parliament in Exile stated.

Hosted by prominent Czech government figures, the delegation's visit was supported by Eva Decroix, Chairperson of the Subcommittee for the Support of Democracy and Human Rights Abroad, and Jitka Seitlova, Vice President of the Senate, alongside other members of the Czech Parliament. The Tibetan MPs shared a letter from the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, underscoring the importance of Czech support for Tibet's rights and freedoms.

The Czech lawmakers voiced strong backing for the Tibetan cause, reaffirming their commitment to upholding Tibet's cultural and political rights. Recalling the historical friendship between the Dalai Lama and former Czech President Vaclav Havel, Czech officials emphasised their dedication to defending Tibet's unique heritage.

The meeting concluded with discussions on upcoming plans to celebrate the Dalai Lama's 90th birth anniversary in 2025, the press release stated. In addition to these parliamentary discussions, the Tibetan MPs visited Sinopsis, a Czech-based organisation monitoring developments in China, including issues related to Tibet. It informed the delegation about an upcoming report on the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, scheduled for release on December 10.

This report will examine the future of Tibetan leadership, particularly concerning the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, a topic that remains highly sensitive. The Tibetan delegation also met with prominent Tibet advocates, Katerina and Martin Bursik, at their residence in Prague, where they discussed ongoing initiatives aimed at protecting Tibet's cultural and political rights. The MPs then held further meetings with senior Czech officials, including Mr. Ondrej Chrast, Deputy Minister for Culture; Robert Rehak, Ambassador at Large and Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues, Interfaith Dialogue, and Freedom of Religion; and Ivana Grollova from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These conversations focused on promoting international human rights, religious freedom, and cultural preservation, with a special emphasis on the Tibetan context. Tibet's struggle involves complex political, cultural, and human rights issues within a region celebrated for its distinctive heritage and spiritual traditions. Since China's 1950 invasion, Tibet was integrated into the People's Republic of China, bringing significant transformations in governance, society, and daily life, stated the press release. Driven by concerns over cultural erosion, religious repression, and widespread human rights abuses,



many Tibetans, including the Dalai Lama, have long sought greater autonomy or independence. The Chinese government maintains its position that Tibet is an inseparable part of China and views its policies in the region as essential for economic growth and modernisation. This stance has ignited persistent global debate and advocacy efforts, with supporters calling for the preservation of Tibet's culture and the safeguarding of its people's rights. Consequently, Tibet remains a sensitive issue in international diplomacy and human rights discussions.

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### **Tibetan environment activist highlights China's large-scale timber extraction**

09 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

Tibetan environment activist Padma Wangyal delivered an address at the "Rivers of the Sky: Glaciers of the Sky" exhibition, which is currently on display at the Central Tibetan Administration's Tibet Museum. The exhibition organised by Tibet Museum and researchers from the Tibet Policy Institute (TPI), highlights Tibet's major rivers and exposes China's exploitation of these vital resources as political tools. Padma Wangyal, who has spent decades advocating for environmental preservation in both Tibet and Nepal, shared insights from his visits to Tibet between 1987 and 2008. He emphasized the extensive logging activities along Tibet's border with China, particularly



in the region of Dhartsedo, where large-scale timber extraction has continued for decades. Citing figures from his observations, Wangyal reported that between 1987 and 1989, as many as 100 trucks transported timber out of Tibet on a daily basis. By 1996, this number had risen to 300 trucks, signalling an escalation in deforestation activities.

Reflecting on his experiences, Padma explained that his initial trips to Tibet were not focused on environmental research but on gaining a broader understanding of the conditions in his homeland. It was only after repeatedly witnessing the Chinese government's extensive deforestation and environmental damage that he became deeply concerned. "Prior to the 1980s, Tibet's road infrastructure was limited," he noted, "but since then, the Chinese government has built roads specifically to facilitate the large-scale extraction and transport of Tibetan timber." Wangyal referred to the Chinese authorities as "red thugs," a term he used to underscore his view of the communist regime's exploitative policies in Tibet.



*Padma Wangyal speaking to the exile Tibetan media following his address at Tibet Museum exhibition (Phayul photo)*

In response to the environmental destruction he witnessed, Padma initiated a tree plantation project in 2000 at Tsurphu Monastery, the seat of His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa in Central Tibet. Funded by His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Private Office, the project received additional support from then-German President Johannes Rau. "I was able to carry out the tree plantation project in Tibet by bringing two forestry experts from Germany, as I had no expertise in afforestation myself," he shared. The German experts provided training to local Tibetans and monastery monks on afforestation methods and sustainable vegetable cultivation around the monastery grounds.

Since 2009, Padma has been unable to return to Tibet. After retiring as an industrial baker in Germany, he dedicated himself to environmental and humanitarian causes, serving as the Khoryug Coordinator for

monasteries in Nepal under the guidance of His Holiness the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa from 2009 to 2023. Wangyal also contributed to earthquake relief efforts from 2015 to 2018, furthering his commitment to community resilience and environmental protection.

The exhibition's inauguration, held on Friday morning, saw Tibetan Parliament in Exile Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering attend as the chief guest. Also present were Karma Choeying, Secretary of the Department of Information and International Relations, and Padma Wangyal's wife, Magda.

### **Tibetan parliament in-exile calls for UN research on 'damage that is being done by China' in Tibet**

09 November 2024, [The Sentinel](#)

The Tibetan parliament in-exile has called on the United Nations to initiate scientific research into the implications of the damage that is being done by the China in Tibetan plateau.

The call was made during the launch of the Tibet Museum's latest exhibition, Rivers of the Sky, in Dharamshala, which aims to raise awareness on how environmental degradation in Tibet directly affects not only the region but also neighbouring countries, especially India.

The exhibition was inaugurated on Friday morning by Dolma Tsering, Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan parliament in-exile, who underscored the plateau's importance for worldwide climate patterns. "The impact is such that the monsoon fluctuation in India and Northeast Asia and the warming Europe. They are all impacted by the thinning of snow at the Tibetan plateau," Tsering told ANI.

"Therefore, we want the United Nations framework for climate convention to have a scientific research on how the Tibet's glaciers, how the Tibet plateau is significant for the survival of whole humanity... I am urging the United Nations to have scientific findings on what are the implications of the damage that is being done by the People's Republic of China."

According to Tibetan environmentalist Padma Wangyal, "There is a massive deforestation is going on in Tibet for the past few decades and it's affecting Tibet's environment very badly. Specially countries like India are directly affected by this environmental destruction in Tibet."

Deforestation has reportedly exacerbated the effects of climate change in Tibet, affecting water supplies and monsoon cycles critical to regional agriculture and ecosystem stability.

Tenzin Thubten, director of the Tibet Museum, emphasised the exhibition's message to the international community and China. He highlighted that the main content for 'Rivers of the Sky' was

developed by renowned researcher Gabriel, but was curated to reflect the Tibet Museum's perspectives. Thubten explained, "Of course, there are multiple objectives behind this particular temporary exhibition, but the main objective is to tell Chinese that your counter-narrative your policy towards Tibet is not working because for last 70 years, China has captured Tibet and tortured Tibetans in many ways but now this is in global ways, in terms of the rivers exploitation. It is not only for the 6 million Tibetan people, it is now to the 2 billion people who are directly dependent on the major rivers that flow from Tibet." (ANI)

### **'Rivers of the Sky' Exhibition Highlights Mismanagement of Tibet's Vulnerable River System Ahead of COP29**

08 November 2024, [CTA](#)

The Tibet Museum of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) launched its temporary exhibition titled "Rivers of the Sky" earlier today, with the gracious presence of Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang.

This exhibition, which underscores the critical importance of Asia's lifeblood and the pressing challenges it faces, is specifically designed to draw the attention of the international community in the lead-up to COP29. It emphasises the growing vulnerability of these rivers in Tibet due to the combined impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and the mismanagement of water resources.

The exhibition also sheds light on the Tibetan Plateau—often called the "Third Pole" for its vast glaciers and snow-capped mountains—which is confronting unprecedented environmental pressures. These include the rapid melting of glaciers and the over-exploitation of water resources through large-scale damming and diversion projects. It serves as a stark warning: if the mismanagement of these rivers continues unchecked, the consequences could be catastrophic. Both the delicate ecosystems that rely on these waterways and the millions of people who depend on them for survival are at risk. The time for action is now, and the international community must address these pressing issues before it's too late.

Tibetan environmentalist Padma Wangyal, who launched a tree plantation project at Tsurphu Monastery in Tibet in 2000 and has also served as *Khoryug* (environment) Coordinator for monasteries in Nepal, was featured during the exhibition's opening ceremony. Padma shared his experiences of witnessing large-scale extraction of wood from the Tibetan region to profit the Chinese state-owned enterprises and private companies during the ceremony and recalled how he received support from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and

Germany's Green Party in realising his initiative to conduct a tree plantation inside Tibet.

Alongside Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, the inaugural of this temporary exhibition was also attended by Auditor General Lhakpa Gyaltsen; Secretary Karma Choeying, Department of Information and International Relations; and Secretary Tenzin Legdup, Election and Public Service Commission; Additional Secretary Kunga Gyaltsen, Department of Religion and Culture; and Director of the Tibet Museum, Tenzin Topdhen.

### **Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang Meets Australia Tibet Council Delegation, Expresses Gratitude for their Support to Tibet**

08 November 2024, [CTA](#)

As part of the Australia Tibet Council's (ATC) "Little Tibet" tour, a delegation led by ATC Executive Director Dr. Zoë Bedford visited the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and met with Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang earlier today, 8 November 2024.

Welcoming the ATC delegation, Deputy Speaker Teykhang extended a warm greeting to the guests and emphasised the special bond shared between Tibetans and Australians. She praised the ATC for its unwavering advocacy for Tibet over the past decades and expressed deep gratitude for their continued support.

The delegation was briefed by the Deputy Speaker on the composition and structure of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, the roles and responsibilities of its parliamentarians, and the election process for selecting them.

The Deputy Speaker also thanked the ATC for bringing the delegation to Dharamsala, noting that learning about the Sino-Tibetan conflict and experiencing the work of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) first-hand would strengthen their commitment to the just cause of Tibet.

Highlighting the importance of spreading awareness about Tibet, the Deputy Speaker stressed the challenge of countering China's disinformation campaigns. She condemned China's expansionist mentality, describing it as one of the greatest threats to global democracy. She also spoke about His Holiness the Dalai Lama's long-aspired vision for a democratic system that ensures fairness and justice for Tibetans, as well as his gift of democracy to the Tibetan people. The Deputy Speaker also drew attention to the critical situation inside Tibet, including the forced relocation of Tibetan children to colonial-style boarding schools and the self-immolations of Tibetans as acts of protest. She expressed her gratitude to the Australian Ambassador to the UN for reading a Joint Statement from a group of nations on 22 October 2024, which

raised the issue of Tibet at the UN General Assembly and condemned China's refusal to address the UN's legitimate concerns.

To conclude the visit, the delegation was honoured with traditional Tibetan ceremonial scarves and mementos as a gesture of appreciation before being given a tour of the Parliament Hall.

### **Tibetan translation of Barbara Demick's "Eat the Buddha" launched in Dharamshala**

07 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

The Tibetan translation of *Eat the Buddha: Life and Death in a Tibetan Town*, a critically acclaimed book by American journalist Barbara Demick, was launched on Tuesday at the conference hall of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamshala. Organised by *Tibet Times*, a Tibetan media outlet, the event gathered researchers, scholars, activists, and members of the Tibetan community.

Originally published in 2020, *Eat the Buddha* chronicles the complex lives of Tibetans in Ngaba, a town at the center of Tibet's self-immolation protests against Chinese repression. Through intimate narratives, Demick captures the resilience, suffering, and quiet resistance of the Tibetan people, especially those from the Kirti Monastery community, who have endured some of the most severe restrictions and violence.

In her virtual message to the gathering, Demick expressed her gratitude to the Tibetan translator, Depo Tso, and editor, Atuk Kunchok, acknowledging their dedication to making these poignant stories accessible to Tibetan readers. She shared insights into her motivation and privileged access that enabled the creation of this book. "I was based in Beijing from 2007 to 2014 as the correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*. As a registered journalist, my press card allowed me to travel anywhere in China, granting me privileges others didn't have. I felt obligated to use these privileges to the best of my abilities. I wanted to report from places that were hard for foreigners to access, and Tibet was one of them," she explained.

Since the book's release, Demick said she has had opportunities to discuss *Eat the Buddha* with young Tibetans, particularly those studying abroad. "I have had opportunities to speak about the book with young Tibetans, most of whom were highly educated university students living in the US and the UK. But I have been surprised that even they are not fully aware of the enormity of what was happening in Tibet from the 1950s onwards," she remarked. "This is why I am pleased that this book has been translated into Tibetan. I am hoping that the translation will be made accessible to the larger audience."

Depo Tso, who translated the book, shared how *Eat the Buddha* resonated with her on a personal level. "The book portrays historical accounts of Tibet, specifically self-immolations, which is something I relate to personally," she said, recounting the loss of her younger sibling, who self-immolated on January 6, 2012, alongside his friend Tsultrim. "He passed on that day, and his friend passed away the next day. Reading this book filled me with emotions, and I cried many times."

Depo Tso also reflected on the book's portrayal of the Cultural Revolution, a period that brought personal tragedy to her family. "During the Cultural Revolution, my grandfather, a Lama, was severely targeted. The Chinese authorities at the time were extremely strict with Lamas, and he was shot three times. He passed away, leaving my father, who was only three months old. Growing up, my father would narrate this story to me, and translating this book brought back those memories," she explained, noting the profound impact the book had on her.

### **Europe Tibet Advocacy in Germany: Tibetan MPs Discuss Critical Situation in Tibet with German MPs**

07 November 2024, [CTA](#)

On the last day of the visit in Berlin, Tibetan MPs Youdon Aukatsang and Tsering Lhamo held a briefing on Tibet in the Committee Room, Paul-Löbe-Haus of the German Bundestag hosted by MP Michael Brand, Chair of the German Tibetan Parliamentary Group for Tibet.

Present at the meeting were MP Michael Brand, CDU Party and Co-Chair of Inter Parliamentary Alliance on China, MP Peter Heidt, FDP Party Spokesperson on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid, MP Maria Klein-Schmeink, Green Party Spokesperson on Health Policy and MP Frank Müller, member of FDP working group on Foreign Policy.

In addition to the UN Advocacy Officer from the Office of Tibet Geneva, Phuntsok Topgyal and Dundup Donka, President of Tibetan Community in Germany, Kai Müller, ICT Germany Director and David Missal, Tibetan Initiative Deutschland joined us in this Briefing at the German Bundestag.

The two Tibetan MPs made a brief presentation on the current situation in Tibet focusing on China's genocidal policies aimed at wiping out Tibetan identity, culture and religion. Particular concerns were raised on the state controlled residential boarding schools, closure Tibetan private schools and monastic schools, and demolition of monasteries in the name of development.

Special appeal was made to the German MPs to pass a declaration in the German Parliament endorsing His Holiness the Dalai Lama's sole authority to determine

his reincarnation particularly on the occasion of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 90th birth anniversary. The Tibetan MPs reiterated that this would send a strong signal to the Chinese government to not interfere in the religious sphere of the Tibetan people.

Upon urging the German MPs to visit Dharamshala to show their solidarity with Tibet, one of the MPs shared his interest in visiting Dharamshala in early 2025.

Following the presentation, Tibetan MPs were taken on an hour-long tour of the German Parliament courtesy MP Michael Brand and his staff. Tibetan MPs departed for Prague on the same evening.

*-Report filed by Tibetan Parliamentary Secretariat*

### **His Holiness the Dalai Lama Extends Congratulations to the U.S. President-elect Donald Trump**

07 November 2024, [CTA](#)

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written to congratulate Donald Trump on his victory in the Presidential election.

"I have long admired the United States of America as the champion of democracy, freedom and the rule of law," His Holiness wrote. "The world places great hope in the democratic vision and leadership of the U.S.A. In these times of great uncertainty and upheaval in several parts of the world, it is my hope that you will provide leadership in bringing about peace and stability.

"The Tibetan people and I have been honoured to have received the support of respective U.S. Presidents and the American people, in our endeavour to protect and preserve our ancient Buddhist culture—a culture of peace, non-violence and compassion that has the potential to benefit humanity as a whole.

His Holiness concluded, "I wish you every success in meeting the many challenges that lie ahead in fulfilling the hopes and aspirations of the American people and in contributing to peace in the world."

### **Department of Education, Central Tibetan Administration Unveils New Children's Books for Tibetan Children**

06 November 2024, [CTA](#)

On 6 November 2024, the Department of Education (DoE) of the Central Tibetan Administration released a series of children's books aimed explicitly at Tibetan children in both India and Nepal. This year, the DoE has published ten children's and five thick books, distributed free of charge. These books are available for download on the Department of Education's Tibetan language learning website and on the Issuu platform for anyone who wishes to access them.

These books are designed to enhance students' reading skills, memory, and concentration while offering fresh and creative inspiration. They aim to give children a broader understanding of various subjects and foster intellectual growth.

This initiative is supported and coordinated by USAID in partnership with The Tibet Fund.

### **Arunachal: TSGAP reiterates support to Tibetan cause**

06 November 2024, [The Sentinel Assam](#)

A team of Tibet Support Group of Arunachal Pradesh (TSGAP), led by its president Tarh Tarak and secretary-general Nima Sange called on Penpa Tsering, the Sikyong of Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), the Dharamshala-based Tibetan government-in-exile, at Tenzingang Tibetan settlement in West Kameng district, and reiterated the group's solidarity and support to the Tibetan cause.

Tarak said that TSGAP will continue its support to the Tibetan freedom struggle and work for the basic welfare of the Tibetan community residing in Arunachal Pradesh. He also said that the TSGAP will organize a series of events to bring mass awareness about Tibetans and the Tibet issues.

While highlighting the relation between Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh before the independence, Tarak advocated freedom of Tibet from China to restore the aged-old barter trade between Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet.

"TSGAP team firmly believes that under the leadership of Sikyong Penpa Tsering, CTA will renew its call for finding a solution to the decades-old Tibet conflict with China through talks," he said.

Tsering, who arrived here on Monday on a four-day state visit, especially West Kameng and Tawang, appreciated TSGAP for its support to the Tibetan cause and issue. Highlighting the CTA's stand on the Tibet issue, the Sikyong of CTA said he would visit eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh in January next year.

Kalaktang MLA Tsetan Chombey, Tibetan settlement officer Raptan Tsering, and other officials of CTA were present during the interactive meeting.

The TSGAP team also met Speaker of Tibetan Parliament in-exile Khenpo Sonam Tenphel, Tibetan Member of Parliament in-exile Ven Geshe Lharampa Atuk Tsetan, TSO coordinator Tenzin Lhagyal and other senior officers of CTA here on November 3 and apprised them of the activities carried out by TSGAP and its future course of action on Tibetan cause, a press release said here on Tuesday.



## DIIR Expresses Gratitude to 15 Countries for Their Statements on Human Rights Violations in Tibet at the 79th UNGA

06 November 2024, [CTA](#)

The Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, is pleased to extend its profound appreciation to the United States of America, as well as to Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, Lithuania, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, for their collaborative efforts in issuing a joint statement during the recently concluded 79th General Assembly of the United Nations, which specifically addressed the ongoing violations of human rights by the People's Republic of China in Tibet and East Turkistan.

Department of Information and International Relations Kalon Norzin Dolma remarked, "On behalf of the Department of Information and International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration and Tibetans in both Tibet and in exile, I acknowledge and appreciate the coalition of 15 nations led by Australia and their leaders who have courageously voiced their commitment to justice, human rights, and peace by raising the grave situation in occupied Tibet at the United Nations. This support is a meaningful step, yet we remain aware that significant work lies ahead to address the persistent challenges and human rights violations faced by Tibetans under the PRC government's colonial occupation. Your collective support at the United Nations marks an important gesture. It reflects the ideals of international solidarity and action, and we look forward to ongoing, collective efforts toward achieving genuine peace and justice". In light of the considerable challenges presently confronting Tibetans within Tibet—including the detention of individuals for the peaceful expression of political views, restrictions on travel, coercive labour arrangements, the separation of children from their families in boarding schools, and the erosion of linguistic, cultural, educational, and religious rights—Tibetan people hold the view that assertive statements regarding China's actions on international platforms could play a crucial role in alleviating these dire situations and mitigating the sufferings endured within Tibet.

## Deputy Speaker Meets FNVA Trustee and Tibetan Researchers

05 November 2024, [CTA](#)

Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang met with Rebon Banerjee, Trustee of the Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives (FNVA), on 4 November 2024 at

the Deputy Speaker's chamber. Three young Tibetan researchers accompanied Rebon Banerjee.



During their meeting, the Deputy Speaker encouraged three young Tibetan researchers to focus more on Tibet-related topics and leverage all available platforms to raise awareness about Tibet.

She also shared her experience attending one of the IPAC meetings, highlighting the importance of a unified message from Tibetans worldwide to reach a broader audience effectively.

The young researchers presented a brief overview of their work, outlining their research objectives and emphasising how well-conducted research, backed by accurate data, can help address miscommunication within the Tibetan community and in the broader international arena.

They further discussed with the Deputy Speaker how the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and the Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives could collaborate for more constructive outcomes and amplify the message, sharing their prior experiences in varied spheres.

They had a very fruitful meeting, followed by a guided tour of the parliament hall, where the Deputy Speaker provided an overview of the parliament's structure, evolution, and functioning.

## Central Tibetan Administration Convenes Three-Day Communication Strategy Meeting

04 November 2024, [CTA](#)

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) convened a communication strategy meeting this morning at the Sager Science Center Hall, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, in Dharamshala, from 4 to 6 November 2024.

In the afternoon, the meeting commenced with an opening address by the Guest of Honor, Mark Tegenfeldt, Director of the General Development Office at USAID, India, followed by remarks from Kalon Norzin Dolma of the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR).

In her address, Kalon Norzin Dolma underscored the necessity of enhancing CTA's communication strategy



to disseminate news and foster public awareness effectively. She emphasised that such meetings are essential for aligning the communication needs of the CTA.

Kalon Norzin Dolma identified three primary target audiences for CTA communications: the Chinese, the international community, and the Tibetan populace. She elaborated on the importance of adequately addressing these audiences and discussed the challenges the CTA faces in this regard. She encouraged participants and facilitators to engage in the three-day meeting to fully maximize its benefits.

Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang addressed the gathering, commending the organiser of this communication strategy meeting, including parliamentarians and staff. She urged all participants to extract the utmost value from the discussions, irrespective of language barriers.

Leela Mulukutla, Chief of the Party at the National Democratic Institute, welcomed all attendees and encouraged a more interactive engagement throughout the meeting.

Members of the Parliament Standing Committee present included Tenpa Yarphel, Lopon Thupten Gyaltzen, Tsering Yangchen, Tsaneytsang Dhondup Tashi, and staff from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile and DIIR.

This meeting is organised by the National Democratic Institute and funded by USAID.

### **Pioneering Tibetan IT outfit unveils five new stages at Monlam Manifest 2024**

04 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon



*Geshe Lobsang Monlam, the visionary founder and the CEO of the Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center delivering opening remarks at Monlam Manifest 2024 at TIPA on Sunday (Photo/Tenzin Leckphel)*

The Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center, a pioneering developer of Tibetan educational software, unveiled five new innovative stages as part of its ongoing technological journey at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) here on Sunday. This year's Monlam Manifest 2024 event drew a diverse audience of Tibetan IT enthusiasts, educators, and community leaders eager to witness the latest innovations.

The launch event introduced Monlam AI, the first of its kind in Tibetan AI, featuring five major tools: Monlam Translate App, Monlam Web Extension, Monlam Nyamrub (Collaboration), Monlam Keyboard, and Monlam Melong, also known as the Tibetan Large Language Model (LLM). These tools reflect the centre's commitment to making the Tibetan language digitally accessible and empowering Tibetan-speaking communities to thrive in the global digital space.

Geshe Lobsang Monlam, the visionary founder and CEO of the Monlam Tibetan IT Research Center, in his opening remarks, spoke of his hope for these tools to bridge technological gaps while preserving Tibetan identity. "Through Monlam AI, we are creating not only tools but a platform where the Tibetan language can thrive digitally," he said. "Our language and culture can now be represented in ways that make it accessible globally while staying rooted in our traditions."

The five tools aim to fulfill Monlam's core aspirations by making the Tibetan language and knowledge more accessible in the digital world. The 'Monlam Translate App' enables seamless translation across voice, text, and image formats, allowing users to translate Tibetan into English and other languages effortlessly. The 'Monlam Web Extension' further supports this goal by allowing Tibetan readers to browse the internet with real-time translations of complex concepts, thereby broadening access to educational resources. 'Monlam Nyamrub' (Collaboration) fosters community involvement by inviting Tibetan users to actively contribute to building Tibetan AI resources, creating a sense of ownership and participation in Tibetan digital progress.

The 'Monlam Keyboard', optimized for mobile devices, offers easy and accurate Tibetan typing, helping users communicate effectively and supporting digital literacy within the Tibetan community. Lastly, the 'Monlam Melong' (Tibetan Large Language Model, LLM), a key feature of Monlam's recent developments, captures the richness of Tibetan language and culture. Designed to mirror Tibetan values and knowledge, it allows users to interact with AI in a way that generates text and answers questions. Together, these tools represent Monlam's commitment to bridging technological gaps while preserving Tibetan linguistic and cultural heritage.

The event also celebrated Monlam's accomplishments, highlighting that over 43 software applications have been developed under the centre's guidance, with Geshe Monlam personally creating 37 of them. The Monlam Grand Dictionary alone has been accessed over 18 million times on iOS, with Android data expected to be even higher. Now comprising 223 volumes, the Monlam Grand Dictionary holds the distinction of being the largest dictionary in the world.

## CHINA POLITICS

### China condemns G7 foreign minister's Fiuggi statement on Tibet etc as interference

28 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

China has on Nov 27 condemned the G7 countries for the joint statement at their foreign ministers' meeting in Fiuggi, Italy, over Nov 24-27. The statement criticized Beijing on a host of issues, including human rights and other matters in Tibet etc, while seeking constructive and stable relations with the country, expressing readiness to cooperate with it to address global challenges.

The statement, released by the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, expressed concern on the "human rights situation in China, including in Xinjiang and Tibet" as well as on "the erosion of civil society, human rights and fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong.

China accused the G7 foreign ministers of, among other things, making wrongful comments on issues related to the East China Sea, South China Sea, and China's Taiwan, Xinjiang, Xizang, and Hong Kong. Xizang is China's Sinicized name for Tibet.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning has said China's position on issues related to the East China Sea, the South China Sea, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Xizang and Hong Kong was consistent and clear-cut.

"We firmly oppose the G7 undermining China's sovereignty and interfering in China's internal affairs. We urge G7 countries to abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and the basic norms governing international relations and look after their own affairs," the official *globaltimes.cn* Nov 27 quoted Mao as saying.

### China's defence minister Admiral Dong Jun under probe for corruption

28 November 2024, [Phayulv](#), Tenzin Nyidon



China's defence minister Admiral Dong Jun in an undated photo (Photo/AP)

Admiral Dong Jun, China's defence minister, is under investigation for alleged corruption, making him the

third consecutive minister to face such charges. Dong, who assumed the role in December 2023 following the removal of his predecessor Li Shangfu, now faces similar corruption charges just seven months into his tenure.

Dong was last seen publicly on November 21 in Vientiane, Laos, where he attended an Asian defence meeting but declined to meet with U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. China's defence ministers have traditionally served as members of both the Central Military Commission (CMC), the highest decision-making body for military affairs, and the State Council, the cabinet-level executive body. However, Dong was neither promoted to the six-member CMC, led by Xi Jinping, nor appointed to the State Council.

In a press conference, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning dismissed the investigation as "just shadow chasing," implying that the allegations lacked substance. However, Dong's case aligns with a growing pattern of corruption probes targeting senior military officials.

This investigation is part of a decade-long anti-corruption campaign initiated by President Xi Jinping in 2012, which has aggressively targeted high-ranking officials within the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Dong's predecessors, Li Shangfu and Wei Fenghe, also fell under scrutiny, with Li removed after just seven months in office for "serious violations of discipline," a term often used to denote corruption. Wei, a former defence minister and head of the PLA Rocket Force, was similarly dismissed, with no details provided on his whereabouts.

Observers note that these investigations reflect deeper instability within the Chinese military leadership. In December 2023, nine senior military officers were ousted from China's national legislative body, signalling a sweeping effort to consolidate power and address corruption in the ranks. Critics, however, argue that the anti-corruption drive doubles as a political tool for eliminating rivals and tightening President Xi's grip on power.

### **China investigates head of Shanghai's free-trade zone for corruption**

27 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Vanessa Cai

### **Zhu Zhisong, Communist Party chief of Pudong New Area, is among a number of aerospace veterans under a cloud**

The Communist Party chief of Shanghai's Pudong New Area, Zhu Zhisong, is under investigation on suspicion of corruption.

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) said on Wednesday that Zhu, 55, an aerospace veteran, was suspected of committing "serious

violations of discipline and law" – a euphemism for corruption.

Zhu is the first party chief of Shanghai's Pudong New Area to come under investigation since the district, a major testing ground for China's economic reforms, was established in 1992.

However, he is the second "tiger", or senior official, in Shanghai to be targeted by the CCDI since the party wrapped up a major reshuffle at its 20th congress in October 2022.

In July last year, Dong Yunhu, Shanghai's top legislator, was put under investigation before being sentenced in August this year to life in prison for accepting 148 million yuan (US\$20.4 million) in bribes.

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Zhu's last public appearance was on Monday afternoon during an inspection tour of two Pudong New Area communities.

He also attended the Hongqiao International Economic Forum on November 6, telling a gathering that Pudong would further promote institutional opening up and better align with high-standard international economic and trade rules, state media reported.

In December last year, three senior Chinese aerospace-defence executives were stripped of their titles as members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, China's top national political advisory body. The measures signalled that Beijing was pressing ahead with anti-corruption efforts in the key military sector.

The trio were Wu Yansheng, chairman of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, Liu Shiquan, chairman of the board of the China North Industries Group Corporation, and Wang Changqing, deputy manager of the state-owned China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation.

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### **China aims for more than 100 'trusted data spaces' by 2028 under national action plan**

25 November 2024, [SCMP](#), William Zheng

### **National Data Administration action plan marks major step forward in building integrated data market with secure links to other countries**

China aims to build more than 100 “trusted data spaces” by 2028 and develop a series of data space solutions and best practices, according to an action plan released over the weekend.

The move marks a major step forward in building a national integrated data market with secure links to other countries.

A trusted data space is an infrastructure for secure data circulation and use, connecting trusted players including data owners, providers, users and developers. The storage and exchange of this data is based on consensus rules and standards, enabling efficient sharing.

According to the 2024-2028 action plan released on Saturday by the National Data Administration (NDA), initiatives will be launched to promote trusted data spaces across enterprises, industries, cities and beyond.

The administration pledged to set up an “efficient, convenient and secure” cross-border data flow mechanism based on multilateral frameworks, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Brics and Group of 20.

“We will explore the establishment of a trusted data space dialogue and cooperation mechanism, and promote the construction of international cooperation demonstration projects for trusted data space under regional cooperation platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative,” the action plan said, referring to Beijing’s cross-continental trade and infrastructure strategy.

It also pledged to “explore the interconnection of domestic and foreign data spaces”.

Within the country, the NDA will build a secure and reliable data space framework, with clearly identified rights and responsibilities for resource management, and safe and reliable application services.

Trusted data space operators will also be encouraged to ensure full traceability of data resource development and utilisation, so as to safeguard the rights and interests of all parties involved.

Operators of the trusted data space will also provide technical services such as data identification and semantic conversion.

Wu Hequan, an academician at the Chinese Academy of Engineering, said that many cities in China generated a vast amount of data that required a lot of pre-processing, because the receiving parties did not always have the ability to handle it.

Trusted data spaces would facilitate data resource retrieval and utilisation, by providing a secure environment for their development and application, Wu was quoted as saying by state news agency Xinhua.

The trusted data spaces plan is one of eight development policy guidelines expected from the NDA, which was set up in October last year to promote the building of a “digital China”.

NDA director Liu Liehong said in July that the eight guidelines would relate to issues including data property rights, data circulation, data revenue sharing, security governance, public data development, enterprise data development and high-quality development of the digital economy.

On Friday, a day before releasing the trusted data space plan, the NDA released a set of draft guidelines for national data infrastructure construction. The guidelines are open for public feedback until December 1.

### **China zeroes in on ‘common’ disputes in wake of deadly Zhuhai attacks**

25 November 2024, [Hong Kong Free Press](#)

*Earlier this month, a 62-year-old man killed 35 people and wounded more than 40 more when he rammed his car into a crowd in the southern city of Zhuhai — the country’s deadliest attack in a decade.*

Beijing is ramping up scrutiny of “common” disputes such as those involving marriages and property, the justice ministry said, as the public reels from a recent string of deadly attacks.

China has witnessed a spate of violent incidents in recent months — from mass stabbings to car rammings — a rare development for a country with a proud reputation for public security.

The issue has prompted soul-searching about the state of society, with some despairing about why an increasing number of people seem willing to “take revenge” on random civilians.

The justice ministry has urged local mediators to carry out “in-depth investigations” into disputes involving family, neighbours, land and wages.

Such close attention is necessary to resolve disputes at the early stage, the ministry said Saturday.

Officials also stressed the importance of maintaining “safety and stability” in prisons.

“It is necessary to increase efforts to resettle and assist released prisoners... to effectively prevent and reduce re-offending,” the ministry statement said.

Earlier this month, a 62-year-old man killed 35 people and wounded more than 40 more when he rammed his car into a crowd in the southern city of Zhuhai — the country’s deadliest attack in a decade.

Preliminary investigations suggested the attack had been “triggered by (his) dissatisfaction with the division of property following his divorce”, according to local police.



Days later, eight people were killed and 17 others wounded in a knife attack at a vocational school in eastern China.

Police said the suspect was a 21-year-old former student at the school, who was meant to graduate this year but had failed his exams.

Officials from China's Supreme People's Court also met Saturday and said they would "severely punish major vicious crimes in accordance with the law and maintain social stability".

And Beijing's top public prosecutor vowed "zero tolerance for crimes that infringe students' rights and interests and endanger campus safety" at a meeting Tuesday.

It also pledged to "make every effort to safeguard the safety of campuses and students", according to a post on its official WeChat account.

On Tuesday, a car crashed near a primary school in central China and injured multiple children.

Many initial videos from that incident appeared to have been removed from China's tightly controlled social media platforms, echoing other mass casualty events.

In the Zhuhai attack, it took police almost 24 hours to release the death toll, and videos of the attack later appeared to be scrubbed from social media.

### **Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning's Regular Press Conference on November 25, 2024**

25 November 2024, [MFA](#)

It's reported that the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) held in Baku agreed on the new collective quantified goal. How does China view the results of the meeting and what role will China play in the implementation of the outcomes?

Mao Ning: On November 24, the 29th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) was concluded in Baku, the capital city of Azerbaijan. After two weeks of tough negotiations, parties reached consensus on the new collective quantified goal, the operationalization of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and other issues. The outcomes of the meeting embody the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and demonstrate global effort and aspiration for climate response.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to COP29. President Xi Jinping's Special Representative, Member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Vice Premier of the State Council Ding Xuexiang attended and addressed the World Leaders Climate Action Summit held during COP29. Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang also attended events hosted by China, including the High-Level meeting on "Early Warnings

for a Climate-Resilient Future" and the Launch Conference of the International Zero-Carbon Island Cooperation Initiative. The Chinese delegation shared information on the Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and China's achievements in climate actions, participated in consultations on various topics in a comprehensive and in-depth manner, contributed constructive plans for negotiations on key issues, and promoted all sides to expand common ground while resolving differences, making important contributions to reaching the outcomes of the meeting.

The new collective quantified goal reached at COP29 requires developed country Parties to take the lead in providing and mobilizing at least US\$300 billion per year by 2035 for developing country Parties for climate action. It is a continuation of the commitment of mobilizing US\$100 billion per year made by developed countries in 2009. The COP29 meeting also called on all actors to work together to enable the scaling up of financing to developing country Parties for climate action from all sources to at least US\$1.3 trillion per year by 2035.

Climate finance is crucial to supporting developing countries' climate response. China calls on developed countries to earnestly fulfill their obligations and responsibilities of providing funding support to developing countries to boost global climate actions. China will continue to enhance South-South cooperation and provide as much support as we can for the climate response effort of fellow developing countries.

Reuters: What is the latest update on the Chinese ship Yi Peng 3 that was anchored between Denmark and Sweden? Are you able to tell us whether the ship is staying voluntarily or if it is being detained and if the crew is being questioned?

Mao Ning: As I have learned, China maintains smooth communication with relevant parties of the incident through diplomatic channels. As for specifics about the Chinese vessel, I have no more information to share and would like to refer you to competent authorities.

KBS: In accordance with China's criminal law, the South Korean citizen detained for violating the anti-espionage law must stand trial within this year. Can you update us on the investigation progress?

Mao Ning: I'm not familiar with what you mentioned. On the specifics about how the case is being handled, I'd refer you to competent Chinese authorities.

TV Asahi: Last Friday, China issued its unilateral 30-day visa-free policy for Japan. Previously, China's stance was to jointly facilitate cross-border travel and require reciprocal visa exemption measures. Why did China change its stance?

Mao Ning: The Chinese government always attaches high importance to the facilitation of cross-border exchanges. We hope that Japan will work with us in the



same direction and jointly facilitate cross-border travel between our two countries.

Rudaw Media Network: Iraq is an important economic and trade partner for China. Israel is threatening to attack regions in Iraq. Do you believe such an action could harm China's interests there? Has China taken any steps through the United Nations Security Council or other diplomatic channels to prevent such attacks on Iraq?

Mao Ning: China opposes infringement upon other countries' sovereignty and security and opposes arbitrary use of force. As tensions in the Middle East are running high, relevant parties need to avoid further increasing the overall security risks in the region. The recent series of incidents once again highlight the urgency of realizing a ceasefire. The international community, major countries with influence in particular, need to play a constructive role and create necessary conditions for cooling down the situation in the region. China will continue to leverage its influence and contribute to keeping the region peaceful and stable.

AFP: A spokesman for Afghanistan's foreign ministry posted on X today about an apparent meeting between top Taliban diplomat Amir Khan Muttaqi and China's special envoy for Afghan affairs Yue Xiaoyong. Can you tell us more about the content or outcomes of this meeting?

Mao Ning: I'll need to check with my colleagues.

Shenzhen TV: The Global Financial Leaders' Investment Summit was successfully held from November 18 to 20 in Hong Kong. The annual meeting of the International Financial Forum was also held for the first time in Hong Kong from November 22 to 23. The two important meetings had the participation of senior financial officials as well as heads of financial institutions from a good number of countries and regions, and received widespread attention. What's the Foreign Ministry's comment?

Mao Ning: We congratulate Hong Kong on successfully hosting these two important meetings in international finance, which represents a vote of confidence from the international community for Hong Kong's status as an international financial center, its business environment and development outlook. Facts prove that with the safeguards of One Country, Two Systems, the strong support of the nation and concerted efforts of all sectors, Hong Kong will maintain lasting prosperity and stability and it will better leverage its role as an international financial center. China welcomes companies and talents from across the world to invest, do business and tap full potential in Hong Kong. They will surely benefit from Hong Kong's development and One Country, Two Systems.

Reuters: The Biden administration is set to unveil new export restrictions on China as soon as next week, the

US Chamber of Commerce said on Thursday. Does the Foreign Ministry have any comment on this?

Mao Ning: China is firmly opposed to the US overstretching the concept of national security, abusing export control measures and making malicious attempts to block and suppress China. Such moves seriously violate the laws of market economy and the principles of fair competition, disrupt international economic and trade order and the stability of global industrial and supply chains, and will eventually harm the interest of all countries. China will take resolute measures to firmly defend the legitimate and lawful rights and interests of Chinese companies.

China News Service: It's reported that on November 24, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko told TASS in an interview that "Naturally, the issue of Taiwan is in the exclusive competence of our Chinese colleagues. However, we see that Washington, in violation of the one-China principle, is strengthening military-political contacts with Taipei under the slogan of maintaining the 'status quo', and increasing arms supplies. The goal of such obvious US interference in the region's affairs is to provoke China and generate a crisis in Asia to suit its own selfish interests." What's China's comment?

Mao Ning: We noted the reports. The one-China principle is a prevailing international consensus and a basic norm governing international relations. China highly commends Russia's just position of staying committed to the one-China principle and opposing the attempt of using Taiwan to contain China.



AFP: According to Japanese media, the United States is working with Japan on contingency plans for a possible future emergency involving Taiwan. These plans would see the United States deploy missile units on Japan's Nansei Islands as well as in the Philippines. Is China aware of such plans and does it have any comments on the report?

Mao Ning: Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the Taiwan question is China's internal affair. The key to upholding cross-strait peace and stability is to remain committed to the one-China principle. China firmly opposes relevant countries using the Taiwan question as an excuse to strengthen

military deployment in the region, heighten tensions and confrontation, and disturb regional peace and stability.

Bloomberg: Lithuania's incoming Prime Minister Paluckas said he is open to restoring diplomatic relations with China three years after a trade dispute led to Beijing downgrading its ties. The incoming Prime Minister signals support for repairing ties by returning envoys to both capitals, but he stressed that his administration won't reverse course on current policies that include maintaining trade links with Taiwan. Does the Foreign Ministry have any comment?

Mao Ning: We noted relevant statement from the Lithuanian side. As is widely known, Lithuania's wrongful acts on issues concerning Taiwan are the root cause of the fraught relations between China and Lithuania. China's door remains open to dialogue and we hope that Lithuania will return to the right path of upholding the one-China principle, abide by the political commitments in the communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Lithuania, and accumulate enabling conditions for the normalization of bilateral relations.

Kyodo News: A follow-up to the question raised by TV Asahi. Has China asked Japan to offer visa exemptions for its nationals?

Mao Ning: We hope that Japan will work with us in the same direction and further facilitate cross-border travel between the two countries.

AFP: Taiwan defense ministry said today that it had detected a Chinese balloon passing over waters yesterday northwest of the island. This is the first such balloon it has reported since April. Can you provide details about the situation or do you have any comment?

Mao Ning: First of all, there is no such thing as "Taiwan defense ministry" and the question is not related to foreign affairs.

Global Times: Yamandu Orsi, candidate for the Frente Amplio (Broad Front), a coalition of major opposition parties was reportedly leading in the second round of votes in Uruguay's presidential election. The candidate of the ruling National Party conceded defeat and the incumbent Uruguayan President Luis Lacalle Pou has sent a congratulatory message to Yamandu Orsi on his election. Do you have any comment?

Mao Ning: We express congratulations for this smooth and successful presidential election in Uruguay and congratulate Mr. Yamandu Orsi on his election as the new president. China attaches high importance to growing relations with Uruguay and stands ready to work with Uruguay to further strengthen mutual political trust, deepen cooperation and exchanges in various fields, have closer communication and coordination in international and regional affairs, and work for the sustained and in-depth development of

our comprehensive strategic partnership to the benefit of the two peoples.

### **China's top judge promises swift justice after recent mass killings that shocked nation**

24 November 2024, [SCMP](#), William Zheng

#### **Chief justice Zhang Jun says stern measures will help public 'truly feel fairness' but lighter punishments may be better for lesser crimes**

China's most senior judge has promised to dish out swift punishments for random attacks on members of the public following a series of incidents that have shocked the nation.

In the most serious incident, 35 people were killed and dozens injured when a car ploughed into crowds of people exercising outside a sports stadium in the southern city of Zhuhai almost two weeks ago, prompting authorities around the country to tighten security measures.

Zhang Jun, president and chief justice of the Supreme People's Court, told a special meeting of the country's top courts on Saturday that serious and vicious crimes must be sternly punished, while trials and sentencing must be timely so the public can "truly feel fairness and justice".

But he said courts should consider lighter punishments for minor social crimes or incidents triggered by social conflict – if the defendant pleads guilty and is forgiven by the victim – to "promote the reform of criminals".

Zhang also said that when there are repeated incidents in a short space of time, the judicial system should find the source of the problem to help prevent future incidents and focus on strengthening correctional education, as well as support for former convicts and patients with severe mental disorders.

The chief justice also told courts across the country to implement a campaign to "resolve conflict and maintain stability" ordered by the country's top security body after the Zhuhai car attack, a statement from the supreme court said.

The suspect in the case went into a coma after trying to slit his throat after the attack. The local authorities said a preliminary investigation indicated he was angry about his divorce settlement.

Days after the incident, eight people were killed and 17 injured when a knifeman went on the rampage at a college in the eastern city of Wuxi. A 21-year-old former student who had failed his exams and was said to be angry about his low pay as a factory intern was detained at the scene of the attack.

Police are also investigating an incident in which a car ploughed into a group of parents and children outside a school in the central city of Changde on Tuesday. A 39-year-old man was detained at the scene.

On Sunday, Yin Bai, secretary general of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission, called for more controls to prevent “major security incidents”.

During a tour of Zhejiang province, Yin said local governments must provide “one-stop solutions” to resolve disputes and prevent conflicts.

He urged China’s security force to dig into their vast data resources to discover potential risks and hidden dangers and better predict when attacks might occur so they can be stopped.

Officials around the country have also been stepping up security measures around schools and other places where large crowds gather.

Dozens of Chinese cities also saw their party and government inspecting security measures at places with large crowds, especially schools, according to mainland media reports.

In one city, Bijie in the southwestern province of Guizhou, the mayor has ordered traffic and pedestrians to be diverted away from schools at the start and end of the school day.

Senior officials, including President Xi Jinping, have called for stronger security measures in the wake of the Zhuhai attack.

The Ministry of Public Security has urged police across the country to “resolve conflicts at the grass-roots level” to prevent “extreme cases”.

Meanwhile, Ying Yong, the country’s top prosecutor, called on prosecution agencies to support measures to deter “similar malicious crimes” but also “learn profound lessons” from the incident and step up investigative action.

### China's top political advisor stresses united front in Chinese modernization

23 November 2024, [People’s Daily Online](#)



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 National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, learns about the operation of the Hainan Free Trade Port at the Xinhai Port in Haikou, south China’s Hainan Province, Nov. 20, 2024. Wang made an inspection tour in south China’s Hainan Province from Wednesday to Friday. (Xinhua/Rao Aimin)

China's top political advisor Wang Huning has stressed the importance of building a broad united front to rally support from all groups in deepening reform and promoting Chinese modernization.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks during an inspection tour in the southern island province of Hainan from Wednesday to Friday.

During the tour, Wang visited schools, universities and enterprises invested by Taiwan compatriots, where he spoke with teachers and students from Taiwan and learned about the investment and entrepreneurship of Taiwan compatriots. He also learned about the operation of the Hainan Free Trade Port.

Wang urged measures to better meet the demands of Taiwan compatriots regarding study, employment, and business operations in Hainan, thus promoting integrated development across the Taiwan Strait.

As of the end of 2023, Hainan had approved the establishment of more than 2,500 enterprises invested by Taiwan compatriots. In November 2023, the province announced a series of measures to encourage Taiwan compatriots to make investments or start businesses in the Hainan Free Trade Port.

### China confronts false accusations that plague Communist Party’s anti-corruption crusade

23 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Xinlu Liang

#### Observers say unfounded claims about cadres waste resources, dampen morale and deter officials from making bold moves to boost the economy

When Chinese President Xi Jinping launched his anti-corruption campaign in 2012, the Communist Party cast its net wide, encouraging party members and the public to report any misconduct.

However, more than a decade later, the party has come to realise many have exploited this to make false accusations against officials.

At a major party conclave in July, Xi and other top officials pledged to “take stronger steps to handle false accusations”.

Observers say unfounded claims about corruption waste resources, undermine careers, dampen morale and deter officials from taking decisive action as China faces economic challenges.

“This disrupts disciplinary inspection work, pollutes the political ecosystem, and hurts the feelings of reform-minded leaders,” said Zhuang Deshui, deputy director at Peking University’s public policy research centre.

Beijing has pledged to foster a healthier political environment that motivates cadres to get things done.

“The aim is not to discourage genuine reporting but to create a positive atmosphere where individuals respect their own rights and report issues transparently, thereby protecting leaders,” Zhuang said.

“In recent years, there has been a rise in fabricated claims, prompting the need for a heavy-handed crackdown on such practices.”

A tally by the *South China Morning Post* of over 100 cases found that common motives include retaliation, personal grievances and jealousy. The accusers include political rivals, people with conflicting interests, those seeking personal profits and disgruntled citizens with unmet demands.

A notable case is that of Sun Xiangyu, a former district police chief in Heilongjiang’s provincial capital Harbin, who submitted over 60 false reports against six police officers between 2015 and 2021, accusing them of bribery and misconduct.

Sun was motivated by grievances and the desire to advance his career and also told others to make false claims. In 2023, he was expelled from the party, removed from public office, and later faced criminal charges, according to a report by the Heilongjiang disciplinary body released in June.

In another case, Ma Weitao director of a tree farm in Henan province, was falsely accused by an anonymous whistle-blower of profiting from illegal sand mining during the 2021 flood season. After a two-month investigation, the local disciplinary body exonerated him and held a meeting to restore his reputation.

In an interview with mainland news outlet *China News Weekly* last October, Ma said that upon learning the allegations against him, he was in very low spirits and considered resigning.

“If party members and cadres like me are held accountable for this, it will inevitably make them hesitant in their future work, and some may even become ‘lying-flat’ officials in urgent situations,” he said, using a phrase that refers to cadres who have become complacent.

He added that timely clarification by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the country’s top anti-corruption watchdog, could encourage officials to pursue hard work and take initiative.

The CCDI is not allowed to investigate the identities of anonymous whistle-blowers unless there is evidence a false accusation has been made.

“This anonymity offers an opportunity for individuals with ulterior motives to exploit the reporting system,” said Zhuang, who specialises in clean governance research.

“This creates challenges for disciplinary work and affects the morale of certain leaders. People may make these accusations for personal gain, leading to the

stifling of important reforms and innovative efforts by capable officials.”

Xie Maosong, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Strategic Studies at Tsinghua University, acknowledged the “critical role” whistle-blowing had played in the “unprecedented” anti-corruption crackdown.

But he noted the battle against corruption had entered a new phase, and efforts to counter false accusations were necessary and healthy “adjustments” that should not be dismissed as side effects of the anti-corruption fight.

Zhuang said false accusations often arise when officials are nearing promotions. If one official is reported while another is not, leaders might be reluctant to promote the reported official – even if an investigation later confirms the official was falsely accused.

A Beijing-based political scientist, who requested anonymity, said that in recent years, the party had “almost been ‘encouraging’ reports of cadres’ misconduct or complaints about pretty much anything, both among the cadre ranks and within broader Chinese society”, which had contributed to false accusations.

She said the efforts to stop false accusations might be a sign that efforts to encourage reporting had “gone too far” and the party was starting to “lose control” of the whistle-blowing campaign.

She added that leaders might be concerned that frequent accusations, whether false or not, could make the party look bad and threaten its legitimacy.

The authorities have stepped up the drive against false accusations this year amid growing pressure to counteract falling economic momentum, analysts say.

Xie said the central government highlighted the issue of false accusations during the second plenum of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection in January and vowed to “take stronger steps” to handle them at the party’s third plenum in July.

“The [third plenum statement] encourages leaders to take bold action and also imposes restrictions on those who make false accusations,” he said.

The third plenum document also calls for taking “stronger steps” in other areas to motivate officials – many of whom are reluctant to innovate and fear making mistakes – to “forge ahead in a pioneering spirit and demonstrate enterprise in their work”.

One of those efforts to motivate officials is the “three differentiation” policy, which distinguishes between “mistakes” made during reforms, suggesting leniency for those whose missteps stem from inexperience rather than deliberate violations of discipline.

“During economic downturns, encouraging officials to take decisive action is critical, but the fear of false accusations from competitors can stifle their willingness to engage with the private sector,” Xie said.

The party's campaign to tackle false accusations ensures accountability for false reports, he said.

"Officials must feel safe to act without the risk of unfounded allegations derailing their careers or decision-making processes," he added.

A handful of provinces and cities have waged campaigns against false accusations and released reports about cases, punishments and steps taken to clear the names of wronged officials.

Penalties for those who make false accusations can range from party discipline or administrative sanctions to criminal charges.

Methods for absolving falsely accused cadres include statements refuting the false claims, private discussions and open meetings to clear their names.

In August, Yunnan province cleared the names of 2,900 party members and investigated 61 false accusation cases.

Heilongjiang province screened 162 reported cases, leading to 145 investigations and 67 punishments, and 657 officials had their names cleared.

Harbin's Discipline Inspection Commission has organised a campaign to punish those who make false accusations. The city has examined reports dating back to 2020 to distinguish between false and legitimate claims.

As of late June, Harbin had reviewed over 12,704 reports and referred 221 serious cases to law enforcement. The city has punished 51 people and cleared the names of 624 officials.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist in handling cases that involve disciplinary violations that do not constitute crimes.

According to lawyers quoted in Chinese media, it is often difficult to determine whether reports should be classified as malicious false accusations or incorrect claims made in good faith.

Zhuang said there was a need for the "political art of balance" within disciplinary agencies, and this required practical experience. These agencies must navigate unfounded allegations while ensuring genuine concerns are addressed and protecting citizens' right to petition.

"If false accusations are reduced, the overall quality of petition reports will also improve, ultimately benefiting the system and restoring trust among officials and the public," he said.

The anonymous political scientist warned: "Whether the accusations are 'false' or 'truthful', basing party discipline on an 'accusation culture' rather than through further institution building and rule of law that can regulate cadre behaviour institutionally probably will not serve the party's interest in the long term."

She added that because the campaign against false accusations is "relatively fresh", it is not yet clear how

it will affect anti-corruption efforts. While local governments have promptly responded, anti-corruption and cadre discipline remain among the central government's top priorities, she said.

### **Top political advisor urges pooling strength of Chinese from home, abroad for Chinese modernization**

18 November 2024, [Xinhua](#)

China's top political advisor Wang Huning on Monday urged the China Overseas Friendship Association (COFA) to shoulder more responsibilities and pool the wisdom and strength of Chinese people from home and abroad to advance Chinese modernization.

Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, made the remarks at a meeting of COFA executive directors in Beijing.

Noting the great successes both the Party and the country have made in the new era, Wang said these achievements could not be separated from the support and contributions of compatriots in Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese. With strong support from the motherland, the prospects for them to serve their motherland and pursue their dreams are very bright, Wang said.

He asked the COFA and its directors to make further suggestions and contributions for the long-term prosperity and stability of Hong Kong and Macao, and enhance economic and cultural exchanges and cooperation, as well as integrated development across the Taiwan Strait.

Shi Taifeng, a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and head of the United Front Work Department of the CPC Central Committee, attended the meeting, where he was re-elected head of the COFA.

### **Xi Jinping weighs pros and cons of China's shrinking population**

16 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Vanessa Cai

China's shrinking population brings both negative and positive effects, President Xi Jinping has said, noting that a lighter environmental burden is among the benefits of a smaller population.

The Chinese leader also defended the "correctness and effectiveness" of past birth control policies, according to excerpts from a speech to the Central Financial and Economic Affairs Commission.



He made the speech in May last year but the excerpts were published for the first time on Friday in Qiushi, the Communist Party's top theoretical journal.

The impact of population decline "must be viewed in a dialectical manner", Xi told commission officials.

The drop could bring positive effects, he said, such as "easing pressure on resources and the environment" as well as forcing economic development.

But Xi also acknowledged the negative effects, such as a reduced labour force and weaker consumer and investment momentum.

"Overall, the impact of population decline on economic and social development has both positive and negative aspects. We cannot look at it from just one side. Some issues require long-term consideration, and we should avoid rushing to conclusions ... and we should work to maximise benefits while avoiding harm," he said.

China faces deepening demographic challenges as its birth rate plummets. Only 9 million births were reported in the country in 2023, the lowest since records began in 1949, as the population dropped for the second year in a row to 1.4 billion, a decline of more than 2 million.

National and local governments have rolled out a raft of policies, such as cash subsidies and extended maternity and paternity leave. But demographers argue these have failed to address deeper issues such as high living costs, insufficient childcare support and persistent gender inequality.

According to the article published on Friday, Xi noted that China's demographic changes arrived as the country "completed in a few decades what took developed nations over a hundred years to achieve in terms of industrialisation".

"The pace of population transition is fast, the population decline has come earlier than expected, but overall it follows the general pattern of modernisation development worldwide," he was quoted as saying by the party journal, which regularly highlights internal leadership speeches months after they are given.

Regarding China's historic birth control policies, Xi said their "correctness and effectiveness should be fully affirmed".

The policies "effectively controlled rapid population growth and the pressures it brought, and strongly supported the reform and opening-up", he said.

China's one-child policy started in 1980 and was strictly enforced with punishment, including fines for violators and often forced abortion. It officially ended in January 2016 in favour of a two-child policy amid an ageing population and shrinking workforce.

This was followed by a three-child policy in May 2021, after a national census showed a fourth consecutive drop in the annual birth rate.

Friday's Qiushi article noted Xi's call for continued reforms and innovation to promote high-quality population development.

But he said rushed decisions leading to "measures introduced hastily that may easily raise controversies" must be avoided.

### **China's Communist Party expels former agriculture minister for corruption**

15 November 2024, [Reuters](#), Mei Mei Chu

China's Communist Party has expelled former agriculture minister Tang Renjian, state media reported on Friday, six months after he was placed under investigation by the country's anti-graft watchdog and removed from his post.

Tang, 61, was investigated for "serious violations of discipline and law", a euphemism for corruption, and removed from the leadership roster of the ministry's website in May.

The move to investigate Tang was unusually swift and follows similar investigations on defence minister Li Shangfu and his predecessor Wei Fenghe as China cracks down on corruption.

Tang was found to have accepted gifts and money in violation of regulations, accepting property in the selection and appointment of cadres, using his authority to provide assistance to his relatives' business activities, and interfering in judicial activities, state media CCTV reported.

"Tang Renjian lost his ideals and beliefs, abandoned his original mission," CCTV reported.

President Xi Jinping has pursued a tough and sweeping anti-graft campaign since taking power in 2012 and earlier this year declared "overwhelming victory" in the crackdown while vowing to keep up the pressure.

Xi views his anti-corruption drive as a key political achievement, but critics say the campaign has been used to purge his political opponents and does not address the root causes of graft, such as low wages and the unchecked powers of party-appointed state officials.

Tang was governor of the western province of Gansu from 2017 to 2020 before being named minister of agriculture and rural affairs, according to official biographies.

Under Tang, the agriculture and rural affairs ministry had stepped up its food security policies, approving the use of genetically-modified crops and adopting a food security law.

China appointed veteran official Han Jun, 60, as the new head of the ministry in September.

## State television serial paints President Xi as worthy son of a glorious father

09 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Xi Zhongxun, the father of China's party general secretary and state president Xi Jinping, is the subject of a rousing new historical drama that premiered on Chinese state television on Nov 5, reported *theguardian.com* Nov 8.

Funded by the Central Propaganda Department of the Communist party of China (CPC), *Time in the Northwest*, a 39-part serialised drama, chronicles the life of senior Xi, who was himself a CPC elder and a key figure in the party under Chairman Mao Zedong.

The show has naturally received overwhelmingly positive reviews on China's closely censored social media platforms, focused as it is on glorifying the CPC's military history. But unlike other popular television shows and films, *Time in the Northwest* also glorifies Xi Jinping's personal family history, the report noted.

Across 39 episodes, the show is said to dramatize the elder Xi's life from a peasant family in rural Shaanxi province to a leader in the CPC revolution in China's north-west.

The report cited an article published by the state broadcaster CCTV to promote the show as saying the biopic is "the first epic masterpiece that presents a panoramic view of the magnificent history of the north-west revolution", and in particular, highlights Xi's "extraordinary experience".

The show, taking place against the backdrop of the Chinese civil war, in which the Communists and the Nationalists (KMT) fought for control of the country after the fall of the Manchu Qing dynasty, portrays Xi as a loyal and determined revolutionary who helped to build key CPC bases in Shaanxi and Gansu provinces.

The senior Xi's fervour as a young man propelled him into the highest echelons of the CPC elite. After the Communists' victory in the civil war, he became the head of the party's publicity department and a vice-premier of China. His red credentials have been inherited by his son, Xi Jinping, who is often referred to as a "princeling" of the party he now controls, the report said.

The serial conveniently ends in 1952, one year before Xi Jinping was born, and a decade before Zhongxun was purged for supporting a novel that was seen as a covert attempt to rewrite the party history.

Were it to continue, the serial would have to show how in the 1960s and 70s, Xi spent 16 years in purgatory. Xi was rehabilitated after the end of the Cultural Revolution, and went on to hold leadership positions.

In the first episode, which aired on Nov 5 evening, Xi is shown scrapping with a school administrator called Wei Hai. In real life, Xi was jailed for his involvement in a plot to assassinate Wei, the report said, citing a

forthcoming biography of Xi Zhongxun by Joseph Torigian, a research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover History Lab. The dramatized version is said to minimise Xi's role in the attempted killing.

"Part of the idea of Xi's model is that this generation needs to take the baton from the older generation," Torigian has said. "One specific, concrete way of doing that is to show how Xi Jinping took the baton from his own father."

This is expected to have a countervailing influence in a country where the buzzwords that have become popular among young Chinese today include *tangping*, or "lying flat", reflecting a desire to quit the rat race for a more passive lifestyle, and *neijuan*, or "involution", reflecting despair at the feeling of being overworked.

## "Red Cultural Education" for Clergy of All Religions in China

07 November 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), Hu Zimo

For seven days, clergy was taken around Henan to pay homage to CCP heroes and learn that "Xi Jinping's thought on culture is profound, logically rigorous, and of great significance."

The five authorized religions in China are taking very seriously the instructions of submitting their clergy to "patriotic education," i.e., the national program of indoctrination introduced by a law that came into force on January 1, 2024. Special guidelines on how religions should implement it were issued on January 4.

It seems that a favorite way for the mandatory indoctrination of the clergy is to organize pilgrimages to the red shrines of the Civil War and of the history of the Communist Party. They are organized at times of traditional religious pilgrimages to effectively replace them. It is also believed that the clergy may like the opportunity to do some tourism and would more easily tolerate boring propaganda lectures if they are alternated with banquets and traveling.

As part of the program, a "red cultural tour" for clergy of all provinces and regions was held from October 21 to 27 in Henan Province. The event, organised by the United Front Work Department, saw the participation of 140 religious figures nationwide.

The clergy was submitted to lectures on the "Resolution of the CCP Central Committee on Further Deepening Reforms and Promoting Modernization with Chinese Characteristics," endorsed at the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CCP Central Committee. The Resolution emphasizes "building a socialist cultural power," noting this is also essential to complete the Sinicization of religion in China.

The seven-day indoctrination tour featured lectures, on-site teaching, and group discussions. The

organizers arranged talks on “Understanding Xi Jinping’s thought on culture” and the “Dabie Mountain Spirit,” which refers to a strategically situated Red Army base during the Civil War.

This was one of the “red” pilgrimage sites the clergy was taken to visit, along with the Red Flag Canal, the Jiao Yulu Memorial Hall, and others. The Red Flag Canal was aimed at improving Henan’s irrigation but what the clergy was not told was that the “heroism” of those who built it in difficult conditions was not spontaneous. It was completed during the Cultural Revolution by workers who in many cases were forcibly taken there, and many died. The official figure of 81 casualties is probably under-estimated. The Jiao Yulu Memorial Hall celebrates one of the Mao-era Communist heroes whose exploits as told are largely apochryphal. Jiao was the Party chief of Lankao and died of cancer at age 42 in 1964. He is hailed for extraordinary successes in agriculture that are probably imaginary.

As reported on social media and in the official press release, the message hammered into the clergy was that, “Everyone believes that Xi Jinping’s thought on culture is profound, logically rigorous, and of great significance. We must not only persist in learning and understanding it, but also truly learn and apply it and put it into practice.”

### Entire Village of the Yi Ethnic Minority “Deprogrammed” in Yunnan

06 November 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), Mo Yuan

When the authorities learned that the banned Association of Disciples had converted all villagers in Jiciping, reeducation was entrusted directly to the police.

The Association of Disciples has been added by Chinese authorities to the category of “xie jiao” (“movements spreading heterodox teachings”) regarded as direct threats to national security, a dubious honor it shares with The Church of Almighty God and Falun Gong.

The Association of Disciples (门徒会, Mentuhui) is also known as “Teachings of the Third Redemption” (三赎教), a name indicating the claim that their doctrine is the third historical source of salvation following Noah’s ark and the cross of Jesus Christ.

The movement was established by Ji Sanbao (季三保, 1940–1997), a former member of the True Jesus Church, in 1989. It was listed as a “xie jiao” in 1990, and submitted to intense persecution.

From 2020, the authorities launched a national campaign aimed at eradicating the Association of Disciples, which, like other forms of “illegal” religion, had experienced a new growth during the COVID-19

pandemic, offering comfort during a time of crisis and an explanation why God permitted it.

During this national campaign, the specialized anti-xie-jiao police discovered something it did not know. From some ten years, in a remote area of Yunnan, unbeknownst to the authorities an entire village had converted to the Association of Disciples faith. Jiciping Village, part of Zixin, Guanping Township, Yunlong County, is not easy to reach. It is located at an eight of some 2,700 meters in Dali Bai Autonomous Prefecture. Its 53 inhabitants belong to the Yi ethnic minority.

They were reached by Association of Disciples missionaries and all converted. The village chief did not report the development to the authorities for the good reason that he had converted himself.

It took ten years to the anti-xie-jiao police to realize what was going on—and to organize a reaction. Specially trained police officers descended on the village and submitted all villagers to intense sessions of “deprogramming” and indoctrination. Villagers were constantly followed by the officers during their daily activities.

In the end, they all had to sign declarations renouncing the Association of Disciples and thanking the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the police.

The scandal of the “xie jiao village” was (reportedly) put to an end. The nation-wide repression of the Association of Disciples continues.

### China warns military members against online dating, gambling

05 November 2024, [VOA](#)

In an unusual warning, China’s navy told young officers and personnel that they could get ensnared by online dating scams and virtual gambling if they let down their guard, exposing themselves to security risks and undermining the military.

Addressing those born from 1990 who are “becoming the core of the army,” the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy said in a social media post that young soldiers should avoid revealing their military identity online as they could be “extremely easy” targets of criminals.

The political and confidential nature of the military profession dictates that the military personnel identity must not be exposed online, it said.

“Distinguish carefully and keep some distance when making friends online,” a line in the post advised, and “never lose sight of your principles and make random friends with netizens.”

The navy also cautioned against virtual gambling, which is illegal in China, likening gambling addiction to being “possessed by a demon” and warning against

schemes that could lead to a "fall into an endless abyss" of debt.

China's military projects an image of power, from launching drills around democratically governed Taiwan to deploying patrols in the South China Sea. But President Xi Jinping, also the military's commander-in-chief, has often warned that the armed forces face "deep-seated" problems from within, including corruption and a lack of discipline.

Young soldiers are not the only demographic singled out. Xi has also stressed political loyalty from senior military personnel.

At a military conference in June, Xi emphasized upholding the Chinese Communist Party's "absolute leadership" over the PLA and that the armed forces must always "uphold their core values, maintain purity, and strictly adhere to discipline."

Xi attributed the root cause of problems to the lack of ideals and beliefs, calling on the armed forces particularly senior cadres, to "introspect, engage in soul-searching reflections, and make earnest rectifications," according to official news agency Xinhua.

### **Xi Jinping urges China's provinces to be patient and fair in push for economic reforms**

05 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Josephine Ma

#### **The Chinese leader also urged provincial leaders to remove the country's internal barriers to create a national market**

Chinese President Xi Jinping has called on provincial leaders to be patient about the pace of economic reforms and cautioned them against trying to solve problems hastily, according to Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily.

He also urged them to break down the fences of vested interests in each province in favour of a national market and to avoid "selective law enforcement", the newspaper said.

"Reform is a gradual process and cannot be achieved with just one move," Xi told the officials last week at a study session about the spirit of the party's third plenum – the conclave that took place in July and outlined the country's economic direction.

The market, meanwhile, is closely watching the meeting of the country's top legislative body, which is reviewing and set to unveil a bill this week on local government debt swaps, along with other measures in a financial policy package to address short-term economic pains and prop up growth.

While it only published a summary of Xi's speech to the officials, the flagship newspaper has rolled out four opinion pieces based on the speech's highlights in recent days in an effort to get the key messages across.

Xi delivered his remarks amid high expectations that Beijing was about to unveil a range of fiscal stimulus measures designed to inject funds into the Chinese economy against a backdrop of economic challenges.

On October 18, China posted quarterly economic growth of 4.6 per cent – its lowest since the first quarter of last year, raising concerns about whether it can reach this year's target of "around five per cent".

Xi has issued three rallying calls since October 14, urging local officials to exhaust all means to reach the economic target, while reiterating the need to deepen reforms with the aim of steering a tech-driven path towards growth over the long run.

He told the provincial leaders at the October 29 study session that they should do everything they could to reach the annual target, according to People's Daily.

Xi also highlighted the importance of protecting people's legal rights, warning local officials not to "selectively" enforce the law nor spare lawbreakers, it said.

While the articles did not elaborate on what Xi meant by selective enforcement, the term has been used in recent months to refer to the practice of provincial authorities hitting private enterprises with fines as a way to boost local government coffers.

Last month, the justice ministry announced an investigation into whether local law enforcement departments have been targeting businesses for selective enforcement or revenue-generating law enforcement.

And in June the party's Study Times called on local authorities to avoid selective law enforcement after reports that some firms had been asked to pay tax bills dating as far back as the 1990s, creating panic among many businesspeople.

Another of the People's Daily opinion pieces said that Xi called on provincial officials to break the local protectionism and market barriers in different provinces to create a national market.

"As the reforms go deeper, the more vested interests will be affected. We should have a better awareness of the overall picture and correctly view the changes of vested interests in the process of reform, as well as personal gains and losses," he said.

One of the opinion pieces said it was noteworthy that Xi had asked the provincial leaders to rally public support by quickly dismissing people's worries and addressing their concerns.

### **Chinese officials told to stop avoiding media questions about emergencies**

03 November 2024, [SCMP](#), William Zheng

Chinese government officials will no longer be allowed to avoid commenting on emergencies under new



legislative amendments to give journalists better “legal protection”.

A commentary published on Friday in Legal Weekly, a newspaper under the supervision of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission – a Communist Party body with a wide range of supervisory powers over the legal system and security apparatus – said changes to the Emergency Response Law meant officials should not be evasive in response to media queries.

The law was adopted by the National People’s Congress Standing Committee in 2007, and was revised for the first time in June. The changes came into effect this month.

“The implementation of the [amended] Emergency Response Law means that government departments can no longer use ‘no comment’ to prevaricate when responding to media questions on emergencies,” the Legal Weekly commentary said.

“It undoubtedly provides legal protection for news interviews and reports on emergencies.”

The commentary highlighted Article 8 of the law, which stipulates that government departments should “support the news media in their coverage and public oversight” of official bodies, and that news coverage of emergencies should be “timely, accurate, objective and fair”.

It also highlighted the duty of government to be prompt in releasing public alerts and other information about emergency responses.

The amended law also warned that no institutions or individuals should “fabricate or deliberately spread false information about emergencies”, and that government bodies should promptly release clarifications if “false or incomplete information” is spreading in the public domain.

The commentary noted that the amended Article 97 stipulates that if the person directly responsible for spreading false information is a public official, “they shall also be punished in accordance with the law”.

The All-China Journalists Association said on Thursday that without timely information and public oversight during emergencies, the government risked falling into a “Tacitus Trap”.

Named after the Roman historian Tacitus, the concept suggests that a government with no public trust will always be hated by the people, no matter what it does. A lecturer from the Communication University of China, who declined to be named, said the amendments were a good start in granting the media some freedom and protection to cover emergencies, but local government officials could easily find ways to circumvent the “no comment” rules.

“What’s key is the law says now the officials will be held responsible if they are found to have fabricated information,” the lecturer said.

“This will curb a little the knee-jerk tendency of local officials to cover up. But they can still play delaying tactics, because the law was not very clear on how timely the release of information should be.

“Alternatively, they can also get around the rules by saying ‘we are still investigating it’, or ‘the death toll is still being calculated’ – which are de facto ‘no comments’.”

The propaganda chief of one area could also call a counterpart in another area, asking for censorship and offering to reciprocate in the future.

“All these are very common in China nowadays, so we can only be cautiously optimistic,” he added.

### Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian’s Regular Press Conference on November 1, 2024

01 November 2024, [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

At the invitation of the Chinese side, Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim will pay a working visit to China from November 4 to 7.

**Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting: I have a question about the terrorist attack in Iran. On Saturday, October 26, 2024, a foreign terrorist group supported by and linked with ISIS-Khorasan, carried out a terrorist attack on two vehicles of the patrol unit of the Islamic Republic of Iran Police Command in the city of Taftan in the province of Sistan and Baluchistan. This attack by the Jaish al-Zalm terrorist group unfortunately led to the martyrdom of 10 Iranian policemen. What is the Chinese government’s comment in this regard?**

Lin Jian: China condemns the terrorist attack. We oppose terrorism of all forms and support Iran’s effort to keep the country safe and stable.

**Reuters: Viet Nam on Thursday said they have protested against China’s alleged detention of Vietnamese fishermen and fishing vessels in the Paracel Islands. Please could the Foreign Ministry confirm this?**

Lin Jian: Xisha Qundao is China’s inherent territory. China hopes Viet Nam will earnestly raise the awareness of its fishermen and make sure they will not engage in illegal activities in waters under China’s jurisdiction.

**AFP: A question about the reported presence of North Korean soldiers in Russia. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy said he was surprised by China’s “silence” on this issue of the North Korean soldiers. What is China’s response to the Ukrainian President?**

Lin Jian: We have noted some reports related to this and responses from various parties recently. The DPRK and Russia are two independent sovereign states, and how to develop bilateral relations is a matter for themselves. China is not aware of the specifics of



bilateral exchanges and cooperation between the DPRK and Russia.

China's position on the Ukraine crisis is consistent and clear. Let me stress that China hopes that parties will work to ease tensions and remain committed to the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis. This position remains unchanged. China will continue to play a constructive role to this end.

**AFP: Still a question on the same topic about the reported presence of North Korean soldiers in Russia. The US said that up to 8,000 North Korean troops have reached Russia's border region with Ukraine. Do you confirm these claims and is China in contact with North Korea on this issue?**

Lin Jian: I am not familiar with this. On the Ukraine crisis, I have shared China's consistent and clear position just now.

**Reuters: Myanmar's local media reports the head of Myanmar will visit China. Please could the Foreign Ministry confirm this visit?**

Lin Jian: I have nothing to share on that.

**AFP: Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, is visiting Japan starting from today. During the visit, the Japanese government and the European Union will sign the Japan-EU Security and Defence Partnership agreement, which according to local media reports, targets China. What is China's response to the agreement between the EU and Japan?**

Lin Jian: Security and defense cooperation between various parties should be conducive to regional peace and stability, and not target any third party or undermine the security interests of other countries. Let me stress that due to historical reasons, Japan's military and security moves have been closely watched by the international community and its Asian neighbors. We urge Japan to earnestly draw lessons from history, adhere to peaceful development, respect the security concerns of its neighbors in Asia, and stay prudent in military and security areas. We also hope that the EU will not interfere in the disputes on territorial and maritime rights and interests between regional countries, but instead play a constructive role for regional peace, stability, and development.



**The Paper: The seventh China International Import Expo (CIIE) will kick off next week, and the preparations are almost completed. According to statistics, the number of participants will hit a new record, with 297 Fortune Global 500 companies, industry leaders and nearly 800 trading groups from various countries set to attend the event. How do you view the significance of this year's CIIE to China's effort of expanding high-standard opening up?**

Lin Jian: Hosting the CIIE is an important step for China to further open up and a concrete action China took to build an open world economy. The numbers you just mentioned showcase the appeal of China's mega-sized market, speak volumes about the strong confidence of the international community in China's economic outlook, and demonstrate the common aspiration of all sides for win-win result through open cooperation. Since the first CIIE in 2018, the event has been upgraded and expanded into a window for China to forge a new development paradigm and a platform to advance high-standard opening up. The CIIE has an expanding network of friends and growing significance as an international public good. This year's CIIE provides support for 37 least developed countries to participate in country exhibition and business exhibition, and further expands the exhibition area for African products in the food and agricultural products exhibition, in an effort to help more developing countries take part in the universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

Openness is the core value of the CIIE and a defining feature of today's development in China. China is striving for high-quality development by advancing high-standard opening up. We stand ready to work with all sides through the CIIE to make the pie of

opening up bigger and the list of cooperation longer, so that the opportunities of China's huge market can be shared by all countries and benefit people across the world.

**Bloomberg: Viet Nam said it has asked China to immediately release vessels and fishermen detained in the South China Sea. It has also demanded compensation for losses. Would the Foreign Ministry like to respond to this?**

Lin Jian: I answered the relevant question just now.

**The following question was raised after the press conference: During the meeting with Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico, President Xi Jinping announced China's unilateral visa-free policy to Slovakia. Could you share with us more details? Besides the 20 other countries whose ordinary passport holders have enjoyed the unilateral visa-free policy, has China rolled out this policy to more countries?**

Lin Jian: To further facilitate cross-border travel, China decided to give visa-free treatment to more countries by extending the visa-free policy to ordinary passport holders from Slovakia, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Andorra, Monaco, Liechtenstein, and the ROK on a trial basis. From November 8, 2024 to December 31, 2025, ordinary passport holders from these nine countries can be exempted from visa to enter China and stay for no more than 15 days for business, tourism, family visit and transit purposes.

# PROTESTS, DETENTIONS AND OTHER NEWS FROM THE PRC

## China sentences veteran journalist on espionage charges

29 November 2024, [NPR](#), Emily Feng

China has sentenced a longtime Chinese state media journalist to seven years in prison on charges of espionage, in a case press freedom advocates have criticized as opaque and politicized.

Dong Yuyu, 62, had been detained while lunching with a Japanese diplomat at a Beijing hotel in February 2022 and held for half a year in a secret location before being formally charged with espionage, a charge he denied, his family says.

The 7-year sentence, delivered in a Beijing court on Friday, came after months of delays in Dong's sentencing. As in all cases China deems related to national security, Dong's trial was held in secret, with no press or family present, and the court provided no records of the testimony or evidence to the public.

"Yuyu is being persecuted for the independence he has demonstrated during a lifetime spent as a journalist," his family said in a statement.

On Friday, Dong's lawyers and family were allowed in court for the sentencing judgement, which was read aloud but not shared in writing. The sentencing accused Dong of inappropriately sharing information with two Japanese diplomats, including its then-ambassador to China, according to a statement from Dong's family.

Well-known among academic and diplomatic circles for his liberal writings and scholarship, Dong worked for decades as a journalist and editor at Guangming Daily, a Communist Party-run publication. He often traveled abroad and met with foreign experts in China, exchanges he always disclosed but which his family now believes may have led to his arrest.

"He is the epitome of the kind of people-to-people exchanges that China has been working so hard to establish and maintain for the past 30 years," the National Press Club, an advocacy organization based in Washington, said in a statement after Dong's trial concluded in 2023. "That era is now over."

More than 60 academics, former diplomats, and journalists have signed an open letter protesting his arrest.

From 2006-2007, Dong studied at Harvard University after receiving its prestigious Nieman journalism fellowship. In 2010, he was a visiting fellow at Japan's Keio University, and in 2014 he spent the year as a visiting professor at Hokkaido University.

He wrote openly on how he believed China's ruling Communist Party could improve its governance but was no dissident or revolutionary. In 2002, the state-administered All China Journalists Association gave Dong an award for a commentary piece he authored which praised the achievements and plans of the Communist Party.

"Yuyu will now be known as a traitor in his own country, instead of being recognized as someone who always fought for a better Chinese society," his family said.

### Tibetan whistle-blower sentenced to eight months for exposing illegal sand mining

28 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tsering Dhundup



Screen grab of Tsongon Tsering

Tsongon Tsering has reportedly been sentenced to eight months in prison for protesting illegal sand mining in his village Tsaruma in Kakhog (Chinese: Hongyuan) County, Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, according to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD).

On October 27, the Kyungchu County People's Court convicted Tsering on the charge of "disrupting social order," a widely criticized accusation often used by Chinese authorities to silence dissent. Tsering, who is currently being held at Kyungchu County Prison, had been detained incommunicado after his video exposing the mining activities went viral on Chinese social media.

Tsering posted a five-minute video on Oct. 14 revealing large-scale illegal sand and gravel mining operations conducted by Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Company. He used a "real-name complaint" method, showing his ID card while narrating how the mining, under the pretext of road construction, caused significant environmental destruction.

He documented the environmental destruction and accused local authorities of failing to enforce existing regulations. His video gained traction on Chinese social media, prompting local government bodies to pledge an investigation.

However, Tsering was summoned multiple times to government offices before being detained. Sources report that he is currently held in Kyungchu County Prison, where his family is barred from contacting him. The heightened restrictions imposed by Chinese authorities in Ngaba have deepened fears for his safety, especially given China's record of detaining activists on fabricated charges.

The illegal mining operations, which began in May 2023, led to severe soil erosion, water pollution, and risks to homes near the river. Villagers repeatedly filed complaints with local and regional authorities, including the Kakhog County Environmental Protection Bureau and the Ngaba Prefecture Water Affairs Bureau, but received no meaningful response. In April 2024, the Ecological Environment Bureau of Kakhog County acknowledged in a written statement that the company had engaged in illegal activities and imposed fines. However, activists, including Tsering, argued that these measures were superficial and aimed at deflecting criticism rather than addressing the damage.

Tsering's arrest paints a broader picture of crackdown on Tibetan activists and whistleblowers who challenge Chinese authorities or expose corruption. TCHRD has noted a rise in fabricated charges and incommunicado detentions across Ngaba, contributing to an atmosphere of fear and repression.

"Tsering's case is a stark reminder of the risks faced by individuals who stand up for their communities," TCHRD stated. "His sentencing is not just an attack on him but a message to all Tibetans that dissent will not be tolerated."

### Renowned Tibetan writer and intellectual, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup released from Chinese prison but remains under strict surveillance

27 November 2024, [TCHRD](#)

On 9 November, a respected Tibetan writer and intellectual, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup was released from a Chinese prison. While Tibetan writers, artists, intellectuals, and activists inside and outside Tibet celebrated his release on social media, the reality remains grim. Like all former Tibetan political prisoners convicted on trumped-up charges, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup, despite being released, is placed under heavy surveillance and restrictions.

Born in 1974 to a nomadic family in Rebkong (Ch: Tongren) City, Malho (Ch: Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup embraced monastic life at a young age. He began his studies at Darzing Monastery before continuing at Rongwo Monastery in Rebkong, Labrang Tashi Kyil, and Serta Larung. He served as a teacher alongside his academic pursuits, nurturing countless monastic and lay students.

Rongwo Gendun Lhundup has been a dedicated educator for over two decades, mentoring nearly a thousand students while contributing to preserving and promoting Tibetan literature and culture. With the rise of the internet, he became a widely recognised blogger, poet, and cultural critic, writing under various pen names such as 'Za' (Planet/Celestial Body), 'Ge

Nyon' (Mad Monk), and 'Lham Kog' (Shoe). His literary contributions, spanning creative writing, editing, and teaching, established him as a pivotal figure in modern Tibetan intellectual discourse. However, his visibility and influence also made him a target of the Chinese authorities, resulting in repeated interrogations and detentions.

On 2 December 2020, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup was detained by Chinese authorities. A year later, on December 2021, the Xining Intermediate People's Court sentenced him to four years in prison on charges of "inciting separatism" coupled with two additional years of deprivation of political rights, reflecting the ongoing criminalisation of Tibetan intellectuals who challenge oppressive policies and advocate for the preservation of Tibetan identity and culture.

On 6 June 2013, in honour of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday, Rongwo Gendun Lhundup composed a poem titled "O Noble One of the Pig Year, I Ask You," dedicated to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, born in the Pig Year of 1935 according to the Tibetan horoscope.

Brimming with longing, joy, and sorrow, the poem evoked the sacred bond between a guru, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his disciples, Tibetans inside Tibet waiting for his return.

#### **O One Born in the Pig Year, I Ask You**

##### **Rongwo Gendun Lhundup**

O One Born in the Pig Year, I Ask You

Where is your homeland?

Where is your palace?

We whisk the dust from your golden yellow throne,  
with trembling hands.

When might you,

With your white hair, swaying with compassion,

With your white smile moved by sorrow,

When will you return, riding a white cloud?

O One Born in the Pig Year, I Ask You,

Wherever you may emerge,

Please save my people,

Please save my culture and religion.

With bent knees and swaying head,

Containing all sorrows within,

Sometimes releasing cold, long breaths,

Fingers pressed to heart,

Lifting your seventy-year-old body with force,

Heedless of day and night, summer and winter,

We have watched your journey on.

We too, with bowed heads,

In a manner unseen by others,

Are praying for your long life.

#### **Literary journey from Rebkong to national recognition**

In 1990, he and his friend Tse Mindrol and other writers published the first private journal called 'Ser Zam' (Golden Bridge) in Rebkong. This was among the first private journals in the Tibetan region. Around that

time, he and his friend, the poet Tse Mindrol, also published two poetry collections under the joint title 'Drong Yak Ki Hurdra' (The Roar of the Wild Yak) Within this collection, his writing was titled 'Kangling Kyawo' (The Gray Kangling.) Kangling is a Tibetan word for a trumpet or horn made out of a human tibia or femur, and it is used in Tibetan Buddhism for various chöd rituals and funerals performed by a chöpa. The two illustrated poetry volumes became a topic of widespread discussion. In particular, a romantically written poem in the book beautifully documenting his journey to Serta was highly appreciated by everyone for both its easy comprehension and perfect poetic qualities.

He published 'Lha Chenpoi Nyenngag' (The Poetry of the Great Deity), a category of high brow Tibetan poetry. When the 'Jang Lung' (The Ancient Green Breeze) Newspaper interviewed Rongwo Gendun Lhundup, he mentioned that his second poetry collection should be considered more like a practice rather than a turning point in poetry for which he was being credited with.

In contrast, his new poetry collection 'Trenywa Nakpo' (The Black Rosary) consisted of forty-one poems written over nearly a decade of experimenting with a new style of poetry writing. Between 'The Poetry of the Great Deity' and 'The Black Rosary,' Rongwo Gendun considers 'The Black Rosary' a better poetic achievement.

On 26 October 2009, his poem 'Gom Shey' (Meditation Song) won China's second National Snow Ornament Literary Award. Later, he published a poetry collection titled 'Mitsey Yangta', (The Melody Horse of Life), mainly consisting of metered poetry.

Subsequently, he published 'Lekpham Karpo' (The White Volume) and 'Khorwa', (Samsara.) Before his arrest, he wrote and published a serial novel called 'Drawai Zintho' (Monk's Diary) online. On 30 December 2019, 'Monk's Diary' won one of China's major National Ethnic Literary Awards, although it is currently deleted and censored online.

An author called 'Lham Kog' (Shoe) wrote many influential articles on the largest Tibetan blogs and most popular websites. During this period, literary circles and enthusiasts were trying to determine who 'Lham Kog' was. Only later was it confirmed that he was the famous writer Rongwo Gedun Lhundrub from Rebkong, Amdo.

On 19 November 2024, he published a poem titled 'Shipar Gyurchig' (May It Be Auspicious) online, and many Tibetans who admire him are sharing it through social media. His published works include six volumes of poetry: 'The Gray Kangling,' 'The Poetry of the Great Deity,' 'The Black Rosary,' 'The Melody Horse of Life,' 'The White Volume,' and 'Samsara.' There is also gossip in the literary circles that he has several other



books in different genres, such as fiction and essays, but these have not yet been published.

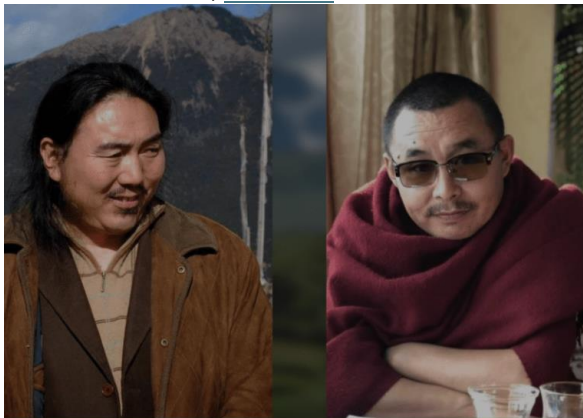
The release of Rongwo Gendun Lhundup is a reminder of the many Tibetan writers and intellectuals suffering detention and persecution under China's oppressive cultural assimilation policies. China must uphold the purported promises of free speech its constitution Article 35 and immediately put a stop to its draconian control over information, stifling fundamental right to freedom of expression and dissent through harsh regulations, often leading to imprisonment and torture.

The systemic repression and malpractices of the Chinese state not only strips Tibetans of their voices but also forcibly suppresses independent publications through widespread censorship.

Rongwo Gendun Lhundup must be allowed to live freely without surveillance or harassment. This fundamental right has been denied to others, such as Tashi Wangchuk, who, despite his initial release, faced surveillance, beatings, only to be imprisoned again. The same fate must not befall Rongwo. His freedom, and the freedom of all Tibetans, must be safeguarded.

### Two influential Tibetans released from Chinese prison

20 November 2024, [Free Tibet](#)



Undated old photos of Karma Samdup (left) and Gendun Lhundup (right)

Environmentalist Karma Samdup and writer Gendun Lhundup have been released from prison

Prominent Tibetan philanthropist and environmentalist Karma Samdup has been released on Monday from Shayar Prison in East Turkestan, and Gendun Lhundup, a prolific writer also known by his pen name Lhamkok, was released last weekend.

Karma, 56, was a businessman in antique objects who was sentenced to 15 years on 24 June 2010 under falsified charges of grave robbing and dealing looted relics. He was in poor health while in prison.

Fifty-year-old Gendun was arrested on 2 December 2020 and known to have been sentenced to prison for

four years, and two more years of “deprivation of political rights” for inciting separation – an accusation routinely used by the Chinese authorities against Tibetans critical of or suspected to be critical of the communist party-state. It is not known which prison he had been kept in.

Karma Samdup is from Dampa Village (ལྷོ་པ་གྲོང་ཁྱེད་) in Samphel Township (བསམ་ཤེལ་རྫོང་གྲོང་ཁྱེད་) of Gonjo County (གོང་འཛོལ་རྫོང་གྲོང་ཁྱེད་) in Kham region. Born in 1974 in the Rebong nomadic region, Gendun was a teacher at Rongwo Monastery. Since 1994, he has published numerous books. In October 2020, two months before his arrest, he published a book entitled Khorwa and urged fellow Tibetans to support it. He claimed that the book presents the truth as it is without bowing to orders.

### Tibetan language rights activist Tashi Wangchuk detained again for “slanderous” videos on Chinese TikTok

14 November 2024, [ICT](#)

Chinese authorities detained prominent Tibetan language rights activist, Tashi Wangchuk, on October 20, 2024, for his language rights activism on Chinese social media platforms. The Yushu (Chinese: Yushu) City Public Security Bureau (PSB) accused Tashi of publishing “fabricated” and “slanderous” videos on platforms such as Douyin (TikTok) and Kuaishou to “slander government agencies” and challenge government decision-making.

Tashi was held for 15 days and released on November 4, 2024. This detention follows his previous five-year prison term from 2016 to 2021 on charges of “inciting separatism,” after his appearance in a New York Times article and video documentary in November 2015 documenting his efforts to petition the Chinese government for Tibetan language protection.

Despite surveillance and punitive measures, Tashi has continued his language rights activism after his release from prison. In August 2023, he was attacked by masked men, presumed to be affiliated with the authorities, in his hotel room in Darlag (Chinese: Dari) County, Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai, while conducting research on the status of the Tibetan language in the area.

The recent detention was specifically related to Tashi's social media activities. According to an Administrative Penalty Decision notice from the Yushu City Public Security Bureau, obtained by the International Campaign for Tibet, Tashi was charged with publishing “fabricated” and “slanderous” videos on Douyin and Kuaishou since June 2024. The PSB alleged that Tashi, using Douyin ID 241933 under the nickname Yushu Tashi, had been posting video clips that “seriously disrupt the cyberspace environment and social public order”.

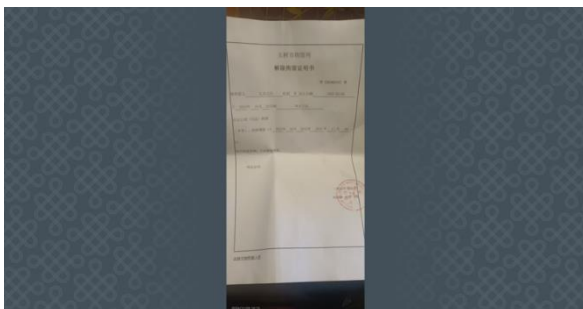
The PSB alleged Tashi's language rights activism "provoked disturbances" and imposed an administrative penalty of 15 days of administrative detention in accordance with Article 26(4) of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Public Security Administration Punishments.

Article 26(4) provides for detention of individuals who commit "Other acts of provocation" that disturb public security or disrupt social order. This broad provision allows Chinese police significant discretion in detaining individuals by misusing the law to suppress activism and free speech.

With a firm belief in his right to freely express himself and advocate for Tibetan language rights in accordance with Chinese and international laws, Tashi refused to sign the Yulshul City PSB decision notice that imposed 15 days of detention for his activism. The PSB noted his defiance in a handwritten note on the decision notice. Since his release on Nov.4, Tashi is reportedly under surveillance by the Chinese authorities.



Yulshul City PSB Administrative Penalty Decision notice imposing 15 days detention to Tashi Wangchuk



Notice of release from detention on Nov.4 issued by Yulshul Detention Center

### Tibet, Sera Monastery Monk Persecuted to Death in Detention

11 November 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), Lopsang Gurung

38-year-old Losel was charged with sharing information about Tibet with foreigners, detained, and brutally beaten.

Last week, relatives confirmed to human rights activists that a monk from Sera monastery called Losel (also spelled Loser or Lose) died last month due

to severe beatings in jail. Dharamshala-based "Tibet Times" was the first to mention the story.

Losel's family didn't know his whereabouts or condition until police returned to them his body in Lhasa on October 21.

Losel, aged 38, was from Tsoto [Village](#) in the Phenpo area of Lhasa. Previously known as Kalden, he joined Sera Monastery as a child. He pursued monastic studies at this prominent monastery.

Detained in May 2024, Losel faced allegations of gathering and disseminating information regarding conditions in Tibet to foreign contacts. He was held by Chinese authorities and underwent interrogations accompanied by brutal beatings that severely damaged his health.

Authorities reportedly did not provide medical care, which resulted in his death within the detention facility.

### Chinese official ruined by crypto investments gets life in prison for selling state secrets

11 November 2024, [The Record](#), Alexander Martin

Chinese authorities announced on Friday that a public servant who found himself with large debts due to failed cryptocurrency investments had been sentenced to life in prison for selling state secrets to an unidentified foreign intelligence agency.

According to a post on Baidu by the Ministry of State Security (MSS) — the Chinese Communist Party's secret police and intelligence agency — the official, pseudonymised as Wang Moumou, was recruited after posting online about his financial difficulties.

Wang "posted on an online forum seeking a part-time job due to heavy debts, openly stating his identity as a public servant," stated the MSS.

"Soon, he was contacted by an overseas individual who offered a substantial reward in exchange for "paid information" such as production tasks and research progress from his workplace," the agency added.

It said Wang initially "provided a small amount of internal information in exchange for the reward" before he began to consider "how 'a few photos and documents could bring in a lot of money,' [and] his rationality gradually faded. His greed and the hope of getting away with it took over, and his illicit activities grew bolder and bolder."

According to the MSS, Wang provided "top-secret and confidential national information to foreign parties," for which he received "over 1 million yuan (\$138,000) in espionage funds through methods such as virtual currency recharge and trading."

The organisation Wang was employed by was not disclosed. The MSS described it as a "certain classified institution" (某涉密单位) an intentionally ambiguous phrase which is typically used to cover a range of

national security entities, from the MSS itself through to research departments.

In the MSS post on Baidu, it stated that Wang's workplace "did not strictly enforce security management protocols and protective measures, creating an opportunity for him to steal and leak classified information to foreign intelligence agencies." It stressed to Chinese citizens that if they suspect espionage activities, they were encouraged to promptly report the incident via a number of routes. Although the Ministry of State Security is called a ministry, unlike other Chinese government departments its logo does not feature the five stars of the People's Republic of China flag, but the Communist Party's hammer and sickle.

While the total headcount of the agency is not publicly known, it is believed to be the largest intelligence agency in the world with estimates suggesting more than 100,000 employees based in a large number of relatively autonomous branches located throughout China.

Alongside its internal security work, the MSS has been accused of cyber operations targeting Chinese dissidents abroad, as well as of stealing intellectual property to benefit Chinese companies domestically, and targeting political institutions to gain strategic intelligence.

### **Jailed Tibetan Community Leader Denied Retrial**

**11 November 2024, [CTA](#)**

**Anya Sengdra has already served 6 years of a 7-year prison sentence.**

-by Radio Free Asia, 8 November 2024

Chinese authorities in Tibet have denied to retry an environmental activist who is serving a seven-year sentence for campaigning against government corruption, his lawyer said on social media.

Anya Sengdra, 53, a resident of Kyangchu township in Gade (in Chinese, Gande) county in the Golog (Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture has already served six years of his sentence for "disturbing social order" after he complained online about corrupt officials, illegal mining and the hunting of protected wildlife.

He was convicted and sentenced in 2019, and has attempted to appeal the decision twice before, his lawyer Lin Qilei said in a post on X on Tuesday.

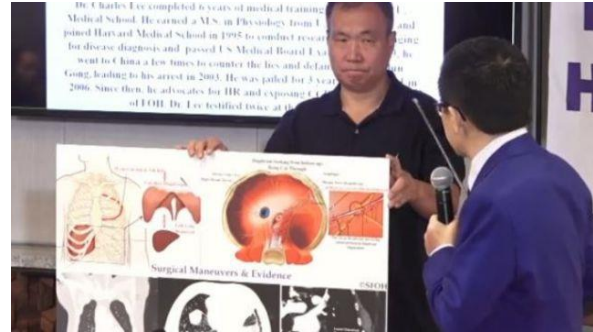
"This marks the third appeal for a retrial submitted to the Sixth Circuit Court of the Supreme People's Court in Xi'an," Lin said on X.

"As usual, I filled out the necessary forms and waited in line. After some time, a judge came out and informed me that they had decided not to review Sengdra's case," Lin said. "He advised me not to return to the court regarding this matter in the future." [Click here](#) to read more.

### **Cheng Peiming: Organ Harvesting Survivor Slandered in China and Threatened in the US**

08 November 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), Marco Respinti

The press conferences of the Falun Gong practitioner mightily disturbed the CCP. It launched a slander campaign in China and tried to harass Cheng even in the US.



*Cheng's press conference in Washington DC, August 9, 2024.*

Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghurs, and others have denounced for years that organs are forcibly taken from prisoners of conscience and used for transplants. The People's Republic of China has mobilized its fellow travelers, including academics, anti-cultists, and religionists, around the world to claim that "organ harvesting" is just Falun Gong propaganda (ignoring parallel reports by Uyghurs and others).

The fact that the European Parliament through Resolution 2022/2657 of March 5, 2022, has officially stated that reports of organ harvesting are believable has not stopped the pro-Chinese propaganda. On the other hand, there is increasing evidence that the organ harvesting issue is now being discussed in China, despite the severe censorship trying to eliminate any online reference.

Cheng Peiming, a Falun Gong practitioners who escaped to the U.S., is the first-known survivor of China's forced organ harvesting. This year, he shared his survival story of organ harvesting prohibition at public events nationwide, including panel discussions and documentary screenings. He detailed his imprisonment for practicing Falun Gong and the forced organ harvesting he endured. Upon request of Falun Gong, two Australian medical experts, both college professors, also examined Cheng, corroborating his testimony with findings that confirm parts of his liver and lung were indeed removed.

Cheng's press conferences were impressive. "The Diplomat" wrote in August that "Cheng Pei Ming's testimony offered a rare and disturbing glimpse into the horrors faced by prisoners of conscience in China."





Cheng showing his scars at the Washington press conference. Screenshot.

The testimony of Cheng is making inroads in China too through clandestine channels. This led the Chinese Communist Party to mobilize the China Anti-Xie-Jiao Association, which is directly controlled by the Party and claims to be the largest anti-cult organization in the world (the claim is probably true). The Association prepared a report that was shared by the China Court Network, "China Youth Daily," and other official sources.

Note that these are Chinese websites for domestic Chinese consumption. Very few people read them abroad. The fact that they felt the need to attack Cheng Peiming shows that his story has gained traction in China, managing to break through the censorship. The rebuttal is based on alleged statements by Cheng's relatives (including his sister, who says she believes the authorities and the jail personnel), doctors, and prison staff, but is contradicted by the medical examinations of the victim in the West. Under what kind of pressures the victim's sister and other relatives may have been put in China is also easy to guess.

Cheng has also filed reports with the U.S. authorities about the harassment he is a victim of in the United States. On November 2, 2024, between 4:00 AM and 6:00 AM, unidentified individuals broke into his New York home, forcing the garage door bolt open and leaving two doors unlocked and ajar. Deep tire tracks were found in the backyard, while his security cameras and alarms were offline from 1:12 AM to 6:18 AM. Cheng filed a police report at 11:15 AM.

The break-in followed several attempted attacks on Cheng and his vehicle over three months. After an October screening of the documentary film "State Organs" in Delaware, where Cheng spoke, his car was keyed. Twice, nails were found in his tires. One incident resulted in a tire burst while he was driving, but luckily no one was injured.

## China said to intensify crackdown on Tibetan monks, religious education

02 November 2024, [CTA](#)

Those who attempted to escape have faced severe consequences, treated 'like criminals' and subjected to further restrictions.

Chinese authorities have intensified their crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism, forcibly relocating hundreds of young monks from Kirti Monastery to state-run boarding schools in Ngaba County, Sichuan Province. Reports indicate that these students, aged 6 to 17, are subjected to prison-like conditions, where they receive instruction solely in Mandarin. They are prohibited from leaving the school grounds or contacting their parents, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported.

Those who attempted to escape have faced severe consequences, treated "like criminals" and subjected to further restrictions.

In July, the closure of the monastic school at Kirti Monastery left over 1,000 young monks without their educational institution, as they were transferred to state-run "colonial-style" boarding schools. Around the same time, Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge County also closed its school, affecting more than 600 students.

Authorities coerced parents into signing agreements that committed their children to government-run institutions, where they would receive state-sanctioned "patriotic education."

Beijing's regulations on religious affairs dictate that students at monastic schools must be at least 18 years old, demonstrate patriotism, and comply with national laws. Tibetan advocates view these measures as part of a broader campaign to eradicate the Tibetan language, suppress Tibetan culture, and enforce "patriotic education," which requires loyalty to China and the ruling Communist Party in all aspects of life, reported RFA. Click here to [read more](#).

## Undisclosed Arrests of Four Tibetans Sweep Through Ngaba as Chinese Authorities Target Monks, Civilians

01 November 2024, [CTA](#)

Since early September 2024, monks Lobsang Samten and Lobsang Trinley (or Trinpo) from Kirti Monastery, and civilians Tsering Tashi and Wangkyi, among others, have been secretly arrested by the Chinese authorities in Tibet's Ngaba County, traditionally part of Amdo province. Since their incommunicado detention, their whereabouts and wellbeing remain unknown.

The recent detainees include Lobsang Samten, 53, a senior monk from Khangsar (Ch: Kangsai) in Golog's Chigdril County, who serves as junior chant master at Kirti Monastery and holds the Karampa (Geshe) title.

Lobsang Samten was among 300 monks detained in a 2011 mass arrest at Ngaba monastery, according to Tibetan media sources. Also detained was Lobsang Trinley (also known as Trinpo), 40, from Rong Kharsa (Ch: Kuasha) in Ngaba County, a third-year Vinaya student at Kirti Monastery who organizes ritual ceremonies. Among civilian detainees are Wangkyi, 43, a mother of four currently residing in Ngaba County, and her brother Tsering Tashi, 41, both children of Kalko (Tib: ཀལ་ཀོ།) and Jigje Tso (འཇིག་ཇོ།) from the Haritsang family of Rong Kharsa. Sources indicate multiple members of the Haritsang family have been detained over alleged connections with Tibetans residing in India. All detainees' current whereabouts remain unknown.

Reports indicate intensified surveillance and restrictions across Ngaba region, with particular focus on Kirti Monastery and surrounding areas. A pattern of undisclosed detentions has emerged, with released detainees prohibited from sharing any information about their arrests, charges, or places of detention, which severely limits public knowledge of Chinese authorities' enforcement and unlawful actions against Tibetans.

broader policy using both administrative and coercive methods to restrict the transmission of Tibetan language, religious practices, and cultural identity to younger generations.

The Chinese authorities must immediately end these arbitrary detentions and provide accurate information regarding the whereabouts of the four Tibetans who are currently missing. The Central Tibetan Administration last September raised serious concerns on the reports of authorities' have forcibly removal of over 1,700 young monks from three monasteries in Ngaba – Kirti Monastery and two monasteries in Dzoge County – and their forcible enrolment in Chinese government-run boarding schools without consent from the children or their parents.

– Filed by the UN, EU, and the Human Rights Desk, Tibet Advocacy Section, DIIR



*Undisclosed Arrests of Four Tibetans Sweep Through Ngaba as Chinese Authorities Target Monks, Civilians.*

Chinese authorities have mandated all monks under 18 years of age in the Ngaba area to leave their monasteries and attend Chinese government-run boarding schools. Kirti Monastery's preliminary studies institute, previously home to over 1,400 Tibetan students and teachers, now retains only about 100 students aged 18 or older, with the rest of the facility shut down.

Moreover, throughout Ngaba County and Prefecture, new education policies require all subjects except language classes to be taught exclusively in Chinese at residential schools. These measures are part of a



# MILITARY AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

## Chinese military conducts patrol near disputed Scarborough shoal

29 November 2024, [RFA](#)

*China's air-and-sea patrol took place as a U.S. carrier strike group entered the South China Sea.*

The Chinese military held a large-scale maritime and airspace patrol near the Scarborough shoal, a disputed reef in the South China Sea known in China as Huangyan Dao, citing "instability" created by "certain countries."

Scarborough Shoal, known as Bajo de Masinloc in the Philippines, is about 125 nautical miles (232 kilometers) from the main Philippine island of Luzon. China now effectively controls it, even though a landmark international arbitration case in 2016 rejected Beijing's claims to most of the South China Sea.

The People's Liberation Army, or PLA, Southern Theater Command, responsible for the contested waterway, said in a statement on Thursday that navy and air forces were taking part in the "routine training" which included reconnaissance and early warning; and maritime and airspace patrol near the shoal.

The Philippines has not reacted to the news but in the past Manila has repeatedly protested against what it saw as "China's bullying."

Also on Thursday, a U.S. aircraft carrier strike group entered the South China Sea, according to ship-tracking data obtained and analyzed by Radio Free Asia.

Data from the MarineTraffic website show the nuclear-powered USS Abraham Lincoln, or CVN-72, transited the Singapore Strait and entered the South China Sea on Thursday morning before moving northeast. Unusually, the ship has its automatic identification system, which shows its location, turned on.

### **'Stirring up trouble'**

The Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group also includes Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyer USS Frank E. Petersen Jr., and destroyers USS Spruance and USS Michael Murphy.

The destroyers have just visited Thailand and Singapore, and are now "underway conducting routine operations in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations," the U.S. Navy said.

USS Abraham Lincoln is the fifth aircraft carrier of the Nimitz class that comprises the largest warships in the world. The U.S. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed fleet with a continuous presence in the Indo-Pacific for more than 75 years.

The navy said in a news release that the fleet "routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region."

In its statement, the PLA Southern Theater Command criticized “certain countries from outside the region” that were “stirring up trouble” and creating instability in the South China Sea but did not name any country. It reiterated that China has “indisputable sovereignty” over Huangyan Dao and its surrounding waters, and that Chinese troops would “resolutely” defend national sovereignty and maritime rights.

### **Western China railroad work progressing smoothly, boosting shared growth**

26 November 2024, [China Daily](#)

When builders from China Railway No 4 Engineering Group Co Ltd (CREC4) started their work in Gansu province on a railway project in 2022, a young woman of the Tibetan ethnic group approached the technicians, asking, “What is that device you are using?”

The technicians from CREC4 Seventh Engineering were surveying the terrain in Luchu county under Gannan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, preparing to help build the Xining-Chengdu railway, which links Northwest China’s Qinghai and Gansu provinces with Sichuan province in Southwest China.

Seeing the young lady tending her herd, they explained to her the uses of the survey tool and its role in helping construct the railway, which traverses the county sitting on the eastern edge of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

The CREC4 staff members officially started their work on Oct 26, 2022, embarking on their six-yearlong task, with 255 managerial employees and 1,376 construction workers, said Guan Lei, Party secretary for the first division of CREC4’s railway project for the Xining-Chengdu railway.

“We also brought 398 pieces of mechanical equipment into our construction site,” he said, noting that his preliminary research showed the task to be an arduous one, as their bid sits at an elevation of some 3,500 meters above sea level, with some sites surpassing 3,700 meters.

“We have to spare every effort in properly building this national railway infrastructure,” Guan said.

Some months into his work, Guan made a mini-movie — On the Xining-Chengdu Railway, It is No Longer Cold — detailing his colleagues’ combat with the cold weather (-30.6 C at extremes) and the high altitude, which brings a lack of oxygen.

“Despite the cold wind which blows over the plateau, and the snow which falls at an early date, we have progressed well in accordance with our schedule,” he said.

Khamdrug Tso is a native of Lhamosi town in Luchu county and joined the CREC4 project team in July 2022

upon her graduation from Sichuan Vocational and Technical College.

Her dedication to her job in materials management has won her widespread praise from colleagues.

“My sincere thanks go to the CREC4 project department, which not only helps me master my skills, but also hands me 6,300 yuan (\$869) each month for my salary, helping improve my family’s income,” she said.

To express her thanks, she brought her friends of the Tibetan ethnic group to an evening party at the project department during the Dragon Boat Festival in 2023, performing traditional Tibetan dances for participants. Wangchen Tso, a member of the Tibetan ethnic group who is divorced with three children and works as a cleaner for the CREC4 project department, found an anomaly on her kidney during a CREC4 medical examination for staff members.

After undergoing timely treatment at a hospital, Wangchen is now recuperating at home, and the managerial staffer from the CREC4 project department went to comfort her with gifts.

She said she was grateful to the CREC4 project department for her physical examination, which enabled her to have timely treatment, and her income from her job can help her and her three children live better lives.

In addition to building the railway, CREC4 employees help locals of the Tibetan ethnic group overall, said Xing Jiang, an office director from CREC4 Seventh Engineering.

Xing said they leased local machinery and equipment and improved the standardization of local machinery leasing; bought local foodstuffs, hardware and specialty products to enrich local incomes; hired locals to help train engineering and technical personnel; set up shared bookstores and health checking posts to boost local culture; and planted more trees to help improve the local environment.

Chigyung Tashi is Party secretary of Lhamosi town and often pays visits to the CREC4 project department to help solve related problems.

It is expected that the Xining-Chengdu railway will extend for 183.47 kilometers in Gansu, including 69.65 km in Luchu, which will have three stations — Luchu, Tsecha and Lhamosi.

“With the new railway, our town will witness faster rural vitalization,” he said, adding that the unit is doing a lot of work for them.

Xing said they are working harmoniously with local colleagues in their daily construction job and in their recreational activities.

One get-together for a drill with the local police and a joint signing ceremony for safety enhancement among the CREC4 staff members this year allowed those from various ethnic groups to develop warm memories, he said.

## China opposes using Taiwan question as excuse to strengthen military deployment

25 November 2024, [Global Times](#), Yang Sheng and Liu Xuanzun

The Chinese foreign ministry on Monday expressed opposition to relevant countries using the Taiwan question as an excuse to strengthen military deployment and heighten tensions, as the US is reportedly going to deploy missile units on islands of Japan and the Philippines as part of "contingency plans for a possible future emergency involving Taiwan." When asked to comment on a report by Japanese media on US plan to work with Japan on contingency plans for a possible future emergency involving Taiwan, including deploying missile units on islands of Japan and the Philippines, Mao Ning, a spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the Taiwan question is China's internal affair.

"The key to upholding cross-Straits peace and stability is to remain committed to the one-China principle. China firmly opposes relevant countries using the Taiwan question as an excuse to strengthen military deployment in the region, heighten tensions and confrontation, and disturb regional peace and stability."

According to Kyodo News on Monday, quoting sources familiar with Japan-US relations, the US military will set up "temporary bases along Japan's southwestern Nansei island chain and the Philippines" to deploy missile units, and the deployment will be "incorporated in the first joint operation plan for the US and Japan" to cope with a "contingency" involving the Chinese mainland and the island of Taiwan to be formulated in December.

Chinese observers said the deployment matter seems familiar - Japanese media disclose "explosive news" against China but neither Japanese nor US officials respond, which could be their "double act" to test China's reaction while exaggerating regional tensions.

Li Fei, a professor at the Taiwan Research Center at Xiamen University, told the Global Times that the US and its allies like Japan have always tried to test China's bottom-line on the Taiwan question by gradually strengthening their military deployments or military activities in the region, to encourage Taiwan separatists and hype tensions, and also set obstacles for China's reunification efforts. "This is just an old trick with no surprise, and China is prepared," Li said. Due to the provocations by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) authorities and the US in recent years, the Chinese military forces have conducted a series of military drills in recent years, and "the more they provoke, the more opportunities will be provided for the Chinese mainland to strengthen its

military preparations to solve the problem," Li noted. The US Marine Littoral Regiment, which possesses a multiple-launch High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), will be deployed along the island chain stretching from the Japanese prefectures of Kagoshima and Okinawa toward the island of Taiwan, according to the sources, Kyodo News reported. The Japan Self-Defense Forces is expected to mainly engage in logistical support for the US marine unit, including supplying fuel and ammunition. The US Army will deploy the Multi-Domain Task Force's (MDTF) long-range fire units in the Philippines. The MDTF is designed to operate in a multi-domain environment, including air, land, water, space, cyber, and information, according to Kyodo News. Known in short as HIMARS, the US-made High Mobility Artillery Rocket System has been a focus in media reports due to its deployment in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It is characterized by its high mobility, high accuracy and long range, but is having lackluster performances recently because the Russians have found counters to it, Fu Qianshao, a Chinese military expert, told the Global Times on Monday. One counter is drone reconnaissance, and once the HIMARS is spotted, the drone will summon fire strikes to destroy the HIMARS before it relocates, Fu said, noting that another counter is electronic interference. The Washington Post reported in May that many US-made satellite-guided munitions including HIMARS failed to withstand Russian jamming technology. Fu further noted that if the HIMARS is to be deployed on Japanese islands, it will not have enough space like on the Russian-Ukraine battlefield.

Islands have complicated terrains and elevations, and it will not be as easy to become mobile. Another point is that islands have limited defense depths, which means that no matter how the HIMARS maneuvers, it cannot leave the area entirely, so once it is locked on by drones, it will very likely get attacked, Fu said. "On the other hand, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces can launch attacks from the vast depths on the mainland."

Also, the HIMARS is less capable than its Chinese counterparts, Fu noted. Even if the HIMARS to be deployed on the Japanese islands is equipped with the ATACMS tactical missile, the PLA's long-range rocket systems can still outrange it, Fu said.

According to the Kyodo report, the US Army will also deploy the Multi-Domain Task Force's long-range fire units in the Philippines.

Fu said the US' military deployment plan aims to blockade key channels for PLA vessels to enter the West Pacific, such as the Miyako Strait and the Bashi Channel. If these countries dare to launch attacks with weapons like HIMARS, the PLA will launch counterattacks, and their chances of survival will be very low.

The external forces must understand that interfering in the Taiwan question is a dead end, and their military deployment plan cannot change China's capability and determination over the Taiwan question, Fu said.

### **Tibetan Art Museum wins Supreme Award for Structural Engineering Excellence**

15 November 2024, [The Engineer](#)

An art museum constructed on the site of a 1960s concrete factory at an altitude of 3,800m has been awarded the 2024 Supreme Award for Structural Engineering Excellence.

The Institution of Structural Engineers (IStructE) awarded the accolade to Tongji Architectural Design (Group) Co., Ltd for their work on the Tibetan Art Museum in Lhasa, Tibet.

Located on the world's highest plateau, the Tibetan Art Museum sits in a remote and ecologically sensitive environment, which presented a number of unique challenges.

A key challenge of the project was upgrading the existing factory buildings, which had insufficient concrete strength, to meet modern seismic standards. Tongji's solutions included strategic strengthening, the installation of damping systems, and base isolation, all designed to work seamlessly with the original structures. According to IStructE, this approach minimised the need for new construction, significantly reducing the environmental impact on the Tibetan Plateau.

Judged across four key pillars - Planet, People, Process, and Profession – IStructE said the Tibetan Art Museum stood out for its commitment to sustainability, minimal intervention, and seismic resilience. The judges praised the project as an 'inspiring example of transformative reuse and seismic strengthening in a challenging environment'.

In addition to the supreme award, 10 other projects were recognised for their contributions to structural engineering, showcasing excellence in areas including innovation, social impact, and sustainability. All winning projects demonstrated the integration of environmentally friendly solutions, with a particular focus on reducing embodied carbon in construction.

In a statement, Professor John Orr, chair of the judging panel and chartered member of the IStructE, said: "A massive congratulations to the Tongji team. Their work on the Tibetan Art Museum exemplifies the critical role that structural engineers play in shaping the future, with the ability to address complex social and environmental challenges. Their ingenuity and precision in seismic retrofitting are truly commendable.

"This year's awards also recognised a wealth of other inspiring projects, all characterised by their intelligent

use of materials, circular design principles, and low-carbon construction. Our judging framework, focused on key attributes, highlights how structural engineers are driving innovation towards a safer, more sustainable built environment."

The winners were announced on November 8, 2024 during the awards ceremony in London. A full list of winners and project highlights can be found [here](#).

### **EU has 'conclusive' proof of armed drones for Russia being made in China: sources**

15 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Finbarr Bermingham

The European Union has "conclusive" evidence that armed drones are being produced for the Russian military in China's western Xinjiang region and has demanded answers from Beijing, several diplomatic sources have confirmed.

EU foreign ministers will discuss the intelligence at a meeting in Brussels on Monday, with some of the bloc's 27 member states calling for serious consequences for what would be considered a major uptick in China's support for Russia's military.

While it is unclear at this stage whether this was approved by Beijing, several sources suggested that it would be difficult to conduct business of this nature without the go-ahead from the central government.

"We have had reports from intelligence sources on the existence of a factory inside China producing drones that are shipped to Russia, and used in the war in Ukraine, but we don't have more than that," said a senior EU official.

Multiple EU diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the evidence was "conclusive", "credible" and "convincing", and that there would need to be serious consequences for Beijing.

The senior EU official, however, said three points still needed to be firmly established before it decided on a course of action.

The first is to confirm the basic information in the intelligence, that the factory is producing drones for Russia. The second is whether those drones had been shipped yet. The third is "the level of knowledge of the Chinese authorities".

"It is difficult to believe that this is happening without the knowledge of the [Chinese] authorities - we are putting that question to them," the official said, adding that it had been raised with the Chinese ambassador to the EU.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, China has maintained that it is neutral and not a party to the war. Several sources said the new evidence showed that Beijing was definitively on Moscow's side and could no longer claim neutrality in the conflict.

One senior diplomat said the findings would show that China has “always said that you want to be neutral - you are not neutral... you are feeding the beast”.

The senior official would not be drawn on specific action the bloc might take in response, but pointed to recent history for examples of how it might move.

“If we finally confirm that there is a transfer of drones, that will have consequences - the same it had with Iran,” said the senior EU official, referring to the bloc’s sanctioning of Tehran for providing substantial military support to Moscow’s war effort.

“We have taken action against all countries cooperating militarily with Russia, first with Belarus, then with Iran... and we are working on DPRK sanctions,” they added, referring to North Korea’s growing support for Moscow.

For the whole of the war’s duration, the EU has urged China to condemn Russia’s invasion and insisted that providing military support to Russia would be a “red line”.

While there have long been concerns about China’s provision to Russia of Western-sanctioned dual-use items – that is, those with both civilian and military uses – the direct supply of arms would take the support to a new level, sources said.

“Now we are apparently a different situation, in which the second part of the story could happen,” the senior official said, referring to Beijing crossing the “red line” The Europeans have raised the matter with Beijing and are ready to take decisive action to punish China if the response is not satisfactory, according to several sources. The senior EU official confirmed that it had reached out to the Chinese ambassador in Brussels and that there would be no deadline on talks, given the severity of the matter.

In September, a Reuters report citing European intelligence agencies found that IEMZ Kupol, a subsidiary of Russian state-owned arms company Almaz-Antey, developed and flight-tested a new drone model called Garpiya-3 (G3) in China with the help of local specialists.

In an update to the Russian defence ministry, the company said it could “produce drones at scale at a factory in China so the weapons could be deployed in the ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine”, the term Moscow uses for the war, Reuters reported.

The development comes at a moment of severe strain in the EU-China relationship, with clashes on everything from geopolitics to trade.

While some have suggested that Donald Trump becoming US president again could usher in a period of relative calm in EU-China ties, as it did in 2017, Beijing’s close relations with Moscow are likely to make that difficult.

Brussels could ramp up sanctions on Chinese firms over the matter, one diplomat said, while others speculated that it could resort to more serious actions,

suggesting that it had a “full toolbox” of punitive measures to pick from.

Thus far, the EU has sanctioned a relatively small number of mainland China or Hong Kong-headquartered companies for allegedly funnelling goods made in Europe to Russian military buyers. These dual-use goods had been sanctioned by European authorities, therefore re-exporting them to Russia is banned under EU law.

The Chinese mission to the European Union did not respond immediately to a request for comment.

Last month, the United States imposed sanctions on two Chinese drone suppliers and their supposed Russian partners for collaborating on the production of Moscow’s “Garpiya series” long-range drones.

“The Garpiya, designed and produced in the People’s Republic of China in collaboration with Russian defence firms, has been used to destroy critical infrastructure and has resulted in mass casualties,” the US State Department said.

### **China's largest air show takes off with fighter jets, attack drones**

12 November 2024, [Index Journal](#), Michael Zhang

Fighter jets and attack drones took centre stage as China's largest air show officially opened on Tuesday, an opportunity for Beijing to showcase its growing military might to potential customers and rivals alike. China has poured resources into modernising and expanding its aviation capabilities as it faces off against the United States and others around regional flashpoints like Taiwan.

Record numbers of Chinese warplanes have been sent around the self-ruled democratic island, which Beijing claims as its territory, over the past few years.

The star of Airshow China, which showcases Beijing's civil and military aerospace sector every two years in the southern city of Zhuhai, is the new J-35A stealth fighter jet.

Video from state media showed the warplane rearing up into the air, engines roaring, before flipping upside down and speeding away as spectators on the ground excitedly cheered.

Its inclusion in the airshow suggests it is nearly ready to enter operation, which would make China the only country other than the United States to have two stealth fighters in action, experts said.

The J-35A is lighter than China's existing model, the J20, and looks more similar in design to a US F-35.

A group of J20s also performed a display flight on Tuesday morning, in a diamond formation across the sky.

State news agency Xinhua quoted military expert Wang Mingzhi as saying the combination of the two models greatly enhances the People’s Liberation Army



Air Force (PLAAF)'s "ability to conduct offensive operations in high-threat and contested environments".

For the first time, a PLA naval jet will be present at the airshow, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The J-15T's design suggests it may be intended for use on China's newest aircraft carrier, the Fujian.

Another key piece of hardware making its debut is the HQ-19 surface-to-air missile system, designed to intercept ballistic missiles and hypersonic glide vehicles, according to state media.

- Drone zone -

The airshow features a dedicated drone zone for the first time, reflecting their increased prominence in warzones, including Ukraine.

The SS-UAV -- a massive mothership that can release swarms of smaller drones for intelligence gathering, as well as strikes -- will be on display in Zhuhai, according to the South China Morning Post.

In October the United States unveiled sanctions targeting China-based companies linked to the production of drones that Russia has deployed in Ukraine.

Moscow and Beijing have deepened military and defence ties since Russia's invasion of its neighbour three years ago, and the secretary of its Security Council, Sergei Shoigu, is due to visit Zhuhai.

Russia's Su-57, a stealth jet with a distinctive grey-and-white mosaic pattern, also took to the skies on Tuesday.

In another display, soldiers descended on ropes from helicopters.

This year the show's focus is squarely on the military sector, as it coincides with the 75th anniversary of the PLAAF, but China's burgeoning space industry will also be showcasing developments.

A model of a homegrown reusable space cargo shuttle will debut at the show, Xinhua reported on Monday.

Named Haoloong, the shuttle is designed to be launched on a commercial rocket, and then dock with China's space station Tiangong.

"It can re-enter the atmosphere, fly and land horizontally at a designated airport, allowing for recovery and reuse," Xinhua said.

Beijing has poured huge resources into its space programme over the past decade in an effort to catch up to traditional space powers the United States and Russia.

### China's Advanced firing range and probable SIGINT facilities near in Shigatse( Tibet Autonomous Region)

10 November 2024, [Resonant News](#), Dr Y Nithyanandam

This report finds that a sophisticated PLA firing range near Shigatse is being used for high-altitude target

practice and weapon calibration. Secondly, it finds evidence of probable SIGINT systems that can listen to a range of signals, including military and submarine communications, from vast distances.

### Backstory

Have you ever wondered what an advanced firing range looks like? While media reports often mention the PLA conducting sophisticated drills "somewhere" in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), this report offers the first detailed glimpse, captured through satellite images, of such a site and its major components. It can show how the landscape has evolved chronologically.

But it's not just about the firing range. Are you curious about what kind of technology China might use for signal intelligence (SIGINT), navigation, or space situational awareness? In the second part of the report, we reveal two massive SIGINT facilities located near Shigatse along the Yarlung Tsang Po River. This report focuses on a significant military site—likely a firing range—and two SIGINT facilities situated just 200 km from the **Doklam plateau**, 150 km from India's border with Sikkim, and 30 km from the Shigatse dual-use airport. This location underscores China's intense military preparations, where a variety of air-to-ground and ground-to-ground weapons are tested and complex target simulations are carried out. The proximity of these sites to disputed areas, including Bhutan and India's Arunachal Pradesh, makes them critical points of interest, mainly as they sit directly along an aerial path over contested territories. The ongoing developments highlight the increasing operational readiness of the PLA forces and the expanding SIGINT infrastructure in this sensitive region.

### Part I: The firing range

Firing ranges at high altitudes is essential for maintaining precision in weapon systems and calibrating older equipment, ensuring optimal performance in these unique environments. The thinner air impacts projectile trajectories, making calibration adjustments critical. Regular target practice helps recalibrate systems for use under reduced air resistance, which affects range and accuracy. For instance, the PLA's high-altitude drills in Tibet tested long-range artillery and rocket systems for precision in low-oxygen, cold conditions. Such drills improve accuracy and integrate new and old systems for combat readiness in plateau regions. In addition to ground artillery, air-to-ground firing is also crucial in high-altitude environments. The reduced air density can alter the trajectory of air-launched munitions, making it essential for air forces to adapt targeting systems and techniques to ensure accurate strikes. Air-to-ground training at high altitudes allows for better coordination between aircraft and ground forces, enhancing the overall

effectiveness of operations. This type of training ensures that aircraft can accurately deliver munitions, even under challenging conditions, which is vital for maintaining control over strategic high-altitude regions.

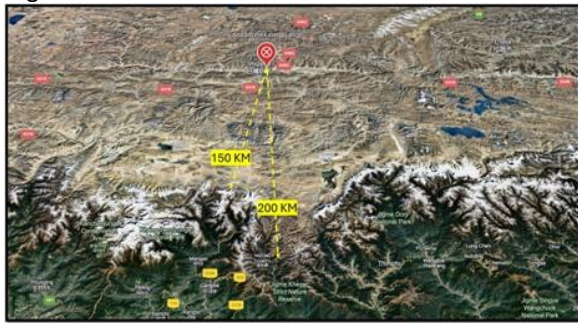


Figure 1 shows the location of the firing range and the distance from nearest LAC with India and Doklam plateau, respectively.

The firing range is situated at the coordinates 29°22'17"N 88°57'32" E in the flood plain of the Yarlung Tsang Po River between the confluence of two streams. The site is positioned adjacent to Highway G349, which is only 400 metres north of the firing range, and near Highway G562, which is located 12 kilometres to the east. This range is probably used for air-to-ground target practice by fighter jets and drones operating from the Shigatse dual-purpose airport or artillery firing. Its strategic location at an altitude of 3850 meters (approximately 12,631 feet) serves to assess the accuracy of targeting at higher elevations.



Figure 2 depicts the satellite image of the site in 2015, prior to its transformation into a firing range. The image showcases natural features apart from a road.

Large dunes, dried-up streams, and muddy tracks were the area's defining features prior to 2016. However, from July to August 2016, the landscape underwent a first sign of transformation. The initial development was the construction of a small-scale runway, measuring 200 by 50 metres, made of concrete. Subsequently, an artificial water channel was established along the western perimeter of the site, initially serving as a barrier.



Figure 3 highlights the key features observed on the site between August 2016 and July 2017. The 2016 image shows limited features, whereas the 2017 image reveals the presence of actual target markings

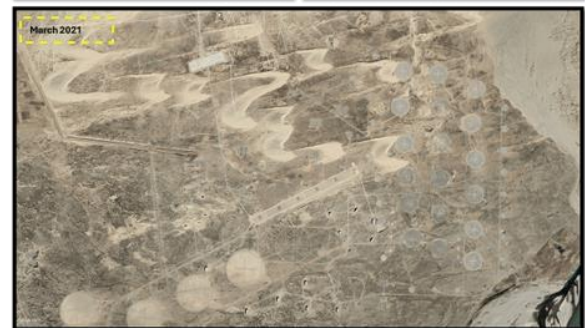


Figure 4 illustrates the rapid developments in the firing range following the Doklam Standoff, along with the phased advancements from 2018 to 2021.

While the initial sign of construction was mushrooming in the second half of 2016, the wide range of markings on the ground evolved rapidly after the Doklam Standoff. It was a 3.13 sq. km firing range during the Doklam stand-off, which expanded to 5 sq. km in 2021. The markings are probably used to calibrate and practice on different weapon systems, possibly for air-to-ground and ground-to-ground operations. The other parts of the range are well connected with the road network, mostly demarcated muddy tracks.

The target pin surfaces are smoothed using loose soil, possibly mined from the adjacent riverbed. Over the five years from 2016 to 2021, the firing range seems to have become a testing ground for various weapons used by the PLA in high-altitude operational environments.

#### Within the firing range

Let us now dive into the various target simulations and markings observed inside the firing range through the lens of satellite imagery.

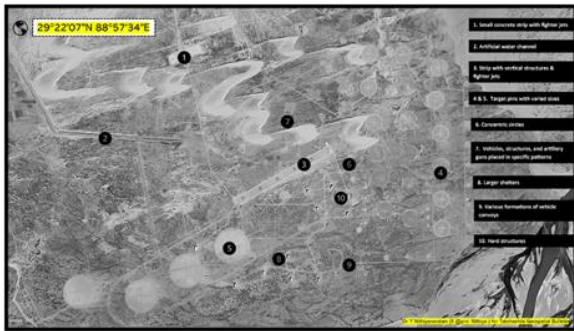


Figure 5 displays the monochrome image of firing range features labelled with numbers 1-10: 1. Small concrete strip with fighter jets; 2. Artificial water channel; 3. Strip with vertical structures in a uniform pattern and with fighter jets; 4 & 5. Target pins with varied sizes; 6. Concentric circles; 7. Vehicles, structures, and artillery guns placed in specific patterns; 8. Large shelters; 9. Various formations of vehicle convoys; 10. Permanent structures.

**1. A concrete strip with fighter jets**



Figure 6 of the concrete strips during different periods: 2021-2024. Read the image clockwise. The pictures of the top row are from before 2024, and the bottom row is from 2024. Numbers 1-4 show various arrangements of fighter jets, and a new extended strip is highlighted in the yellow box—images credits: Maxar, ESRI and Google earth.

Small concrete strips can be observed with fighter jets positioned in various places at different times, with the number of planes changing periodically. These planes, resembling the Su-30 series, appear to be decoys or old, non-functional models likely used for target practice and formation exercises. The strip is probably connected to a road network for moving the planes. Some images show destroyed planes, while others display new sets, indicating ongoing activities in the area. Despite the presence of fighter jets and other nearby assets, the strip is significantly smaller (200\*50 metres) than a typical runway required for take-off and landing, reinforcing the idea that the site is primarily used for target practice. An extension piece of the concrete strip will be developed in 2024, containing hardened kinds of simulated targets.

**2. Artificial water channel**



Figure 7 depicts an artificial water channel that carries water to the firing range from 35 km. The markings are explained as follows: 1. The diversion from the main Yarlung Tsan Po River; 2. The channel passes through the mountain via a tunnel; 3. The water is diverted and stored in an artificial pond; 4. The channel ends in the firing range—images Credits: Maxar & Google Earth.

A narrow channel, approximately 3 metres wide, flows into the firing range, where it ends abruptly. This channel originates from a place called Sequi, located roughly 35 Km to the east of the site. It carries freshwater diverted from the Yarlung Tsangpo River, providing an essential water supply to various villages and regions along its path. This channel may offer a purer freshwater source than the water available in downstream areas. Along its route, the water is stored in numerous artificial reservoirs or ponds, which may serve purposes such as irrigation and domestic use for the communities it passes. The water primarily moves via natural gravity, travelling across the landscape and navigating through several barrages, confluences of larger rivers, and smaller streams. Remarkably, at one point, the channel even cuts through a mountain via a tunnel, showcasing significant engineering effort. What is particularly puzzling is the rationale behind transporting this water over such long distances and through challenging terrain, which involves tunnelling through mountains, crossing dried riverbeds, and constructing bridges. Why the water is sourced from so far upstream, rather than utilising more accessible local water resources right next to the firing range through methods like pumping remains unclear. The reasoning behind this intricate water transport system is still a mystery, leaving questions about its intended purpose and the motivations behind its design unanswered.

**3. levelled strip**





Figure 8 depicts a levelled strip with vertical structures and decoy planes positioned for target practice. Images credits: Maxar, Google Earth and ESRI. A levelled strip, measuring 1300 metres in length and 50 metres in width, is in the centre of the firing range. On one side of the strip, there is a section measuring 140 metres in length and 30 metres in width, where dummy aircraft were positioned. In 2018, two aircraft were placed in this area, pointed in a specific direction and good condition. However, satellite images from 2021 reveal that the aircraft has sustained damage. One appears to have been dislocated, with parts scattered along the direction of the hit. Subsequent photos show the aircraft becoming increasingly disoriented and displaced over time, indicating that target practice has been conducted regularly. Additionally, the strip is dotted with vertical structures arranged into five distinct clusters, each spaced approximately 200 metres apart. Each cluster contains five vertical pillars: two in the front row and three in the second row. The land around the clusters has been levelled and paved with concrete, and vehicles have occasionally been spotted next to the clusters. There are five clusters with 25 vertical pillars on this strip extending east to west. Meanwhile, another five clusters with 25 vertical pillars are evident in the linear structure from north to south. Below the strip are two more clusters, each with ten vertical pillars. While the vertical pillars have remained intact over the years, the condition of the aircraft and their wreckage has varied, with vehicles appearing intermittently in the area.

#### 4-6. Target pins of varied size



Figure 9 shows target pins of different sizes numbered as follows: 1. 50 m radius; 2. 100 m radius 3. 15 m radius with two concentric circles 4. 15-radius with three concentric circles, each with an interval of 5 m.

Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth. At the firing range, circular target markers of various sizes are observed. The site had a circle with a 100-meter radius and rectangular markings around it in November 2017. Initially, there were also four 50-meter radius circles and some concentric circles in the southeastern corner. Post-Doklam, significant changes were noted. By 2021, the number of large circles increased to four, each with a 100-meter radius and distinctive (+) marking. Furthermore, 18 circles with a 50-meter radius and several smaller circles with a 15-meter radius, all marked centrally, were also present. In addition, six of the 15-meter radius circles included concentric rings at 5, 10, and 15 metres within them. This arrangement has been consistently maintained, with annual upkeep. Occasionally, the orientation of the markings is adjusted. Craters within the circles are subsequently filled as part of site redevelopment, indicating that regular target practice is conducted. These targets are not merely superficial but reinforced to endure sustained firepower. The circles with markings probably indicate air-to-ground targeting simulations and ground-to-ground calibration of weapons.

Most of the circular targets are concentrated on the eastern and southern sides of the range, with rivers bordering both ends of the area.

#### 7. Array of structures



Figure 10 shows the array of structures placed in a linear network. The patches are connected to the artery of roads. The images of two different periods indicate the changes in the position of objects. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.

A network of roads that resemble arteries connects the various target patches set up in this area. There are over ten distinct patches, some situated near dunes, possibly providing protection. Each patch contains a group of structures spaced evenly apart, typically by 8 to 10 units. The number of structures in each patch varies, ranging from 8 to 10, and they are positioned in different orientations. Some structures resemble individual houses, while others resemble probable artillery units. Notably, the number and arrangement of these structures are inconsistent across satellite imagery from different periods. These patches are located centrally within a firing range and may be used for various target practice simulations.

#### 8-10. Mix of functional objects and decoys

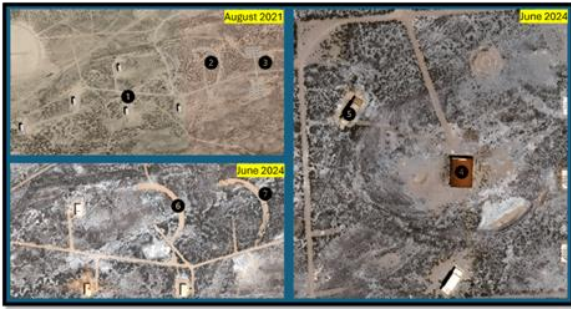


Figure 11 shows the imagery of vehicle decoys and structures placed in the southwest part of the firing range. The number 1 indicates individual target structures, 2&3 vehicles placed in various positions, and four, a concrete structure resembling a hangar. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.

The image highlights several large individual structures positioned at various points along the roads and road extensions. It also shows target simulations, including vehicle convoys arranged linearly. Notably, a significant structure marked as number 4 in the June 2024 image appears to be a large aircraft hangar, possibly constructed with durable materials and serving as a storage facility or a simulated target like a hangar.

The structures are identified as follows: number 1 refers to individual structures, numbers 2 and 3 represent individual vehicle convoys, while numbers 4 and 5 denote larger structures, potentially simulated targets or storage areas. Numbers 6 and 7 indicate recent changes in the convoys' positions and placement.

Comparing the August 2000 image with the June 2024 image reveals variations in the positions of these structures. Notably, some of these structures are active, not merely decoys. The vehicles and specific structures emit electronic signals, suggesting they are functioning units rather than static or inactive targets. This part of the firing range in the southwest section appears highly active, likely simulating scenarios that change periodically based on operational requirements.

#### 11. Few other features

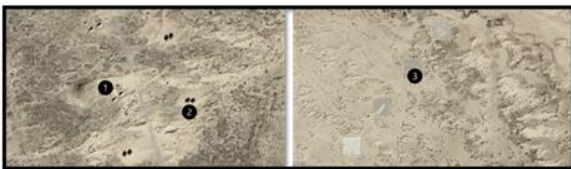


Figure 12 shows the 2021 satellite images of a few minor features, and the numbers indicate the following: 1. Mobile launcher 2. Pairs of radars, 3. Launchpads. Images credit: Google Earth.

In addition to the main features previously described, there are a few more minor, unmarked elements worth noting. Three pairs of radars are positioned adjacent, along with two pairs of mobile launchers, all

within an area of approximately 1,000 square metres. The radars are spaced less than 10 metres apart, and the launchers are about 10 metres apart, suggesting they might serve as decoys rather than active operational units.

Four concrete pads are visible outside the firing range on the northwest side near a river junction. Despite having markers and roads connecting them, the purpose of these patches is unknown. Scattered throughout the area are several destroyed structures, with damaged objects and simulated features related to air operations and ground infrastructure. These appear to be used as targets during training exercises.

#### The monitoring station

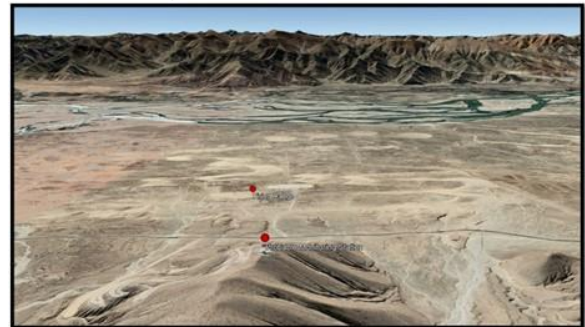


Figure 13 illustrates the 3D view of a potential monitoring station established to provide an aerial perspective of the range. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.

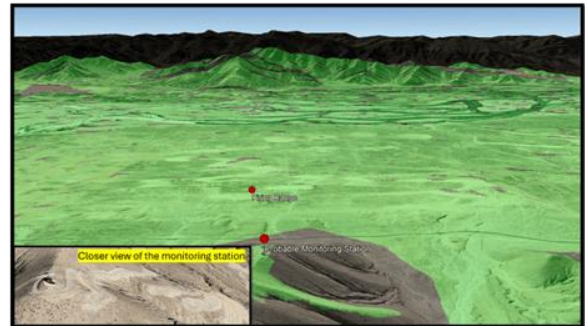


Figure 14 shows the 3D result of the view shed geospatial analysis carried out for the firing range and a closer look at the monitoring station. Images credit: ESRI, Maxar & Google Earth.

The Probable Monitoring Station is located at 4025 metres, right next to the highway and facing the centre of the firing range, which is at 3835 metres. This elevated position gives the station a clear view of the firing range.

View shed Geospatial analysis helps to determine the coverage area using 3D data, with the results displayed in green. The green areas represent the visible areas from the highest point. Considering the station's location, elevation, antennas, road construction, and existing facilities, this is likely a monitoring station for regular firing exercises.

Is this an active firing range?



While studying the developments in the firing area, a big question remains: When were these sites active in the past, and are they still functional today? We used techniques adopted in our previous studies based on remote sensing inference to find some answers. These findings reveal some interesting things, which are explained below.

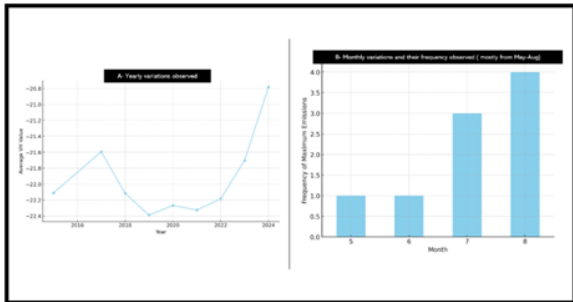


Figure 15 illustrates the potential activities conducted at the firing range. A shows the year-on-year changes, and B shows the frequency and season during which the firing range operations were most frequent.

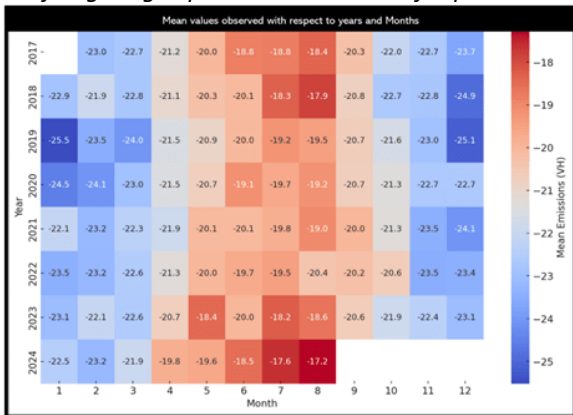


Figure 16 illustrates the highest signal emissions (interference) detected from space in various periods and months since 2017.

A space-based approach to monitor ground activity instead of relying on traditional SIGINT methods is used. This allowed us to observe changes throughout the year. In 2017, certain areas of the range were highly active, but from 2018 to 2021, the activity gradually decreased. From 2023, the activity began to increase again, sometimes holding steady until early 2024 before declining slightly. However, overall activity levels remained high. The range is most active from May to August, with August seeing the highest usage, followed by July. Over the years, operations have primarily occurred between May and August, with occasional activity extending into September. August is consistently the busiest month, although shifting patterns may reflect weather changes or other schedule factors.

It is important to note that the above analysis is based on observations of specific sections of the firing range. It relies on limited open-source satellite imagery, which may not fully or accurately reflect the actual

extent of exercises conducted. Corroboration with additional intelligence sources is recommended for a more comprehensive and accurate interpretation. Part II: Probable signal intelligence (SIGINT) facilities While exploring places around the firing range, we noticed some interesting structures. These might be advanced signal intelligence facilities with broader utilisation and military importance beyond the firing range.

Site A

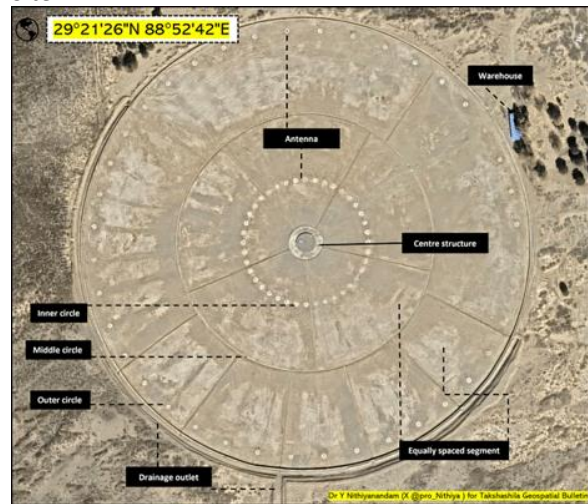


Figure 17 shows a massive circular feature related to signal intelligence. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth

The site is situated about 6 km west of the firing range and 38 km west of Shigatse Airport, at an elevation of 3,840 metres. Positioned along the banks of the Yarlung Tsangpo River, directly across from Shigatse City, the feature has an approximate radius of 180 metres and a circumference of around 1,134 metres. The physical characteristics of site A without fingerprinting it are as follows:

- Circle and Antenna Placement:
  - First Inner Circle: The innermost circle, located 50 meters from the centre, is populated by 40 evenly spaced antennas around its circumference.
  - Middle Circle: The middle circle, sitting 100 meters from the centre, acts as a boundary for the area between the inner and outermost circles.
  - Last Outer Circle: The outermost circle, situated 170 meters from the centre, contains 40 antennas along its circumference, completing the outermost layer of the structure.

Radial

Divisions:

The area between the centre point and the inner circle and between the inner and middle circles is divided into five segments by radial lines extending from the centre. These lines create distinct zones within these circles. Further, the image shows the structure divided into 16 equal segments by radial lines extending from the middle circle to the outer perimeter, creating additional distinct areas.

Central Elevated Structure:  
 At the centre of the feature is an elevated circular structure with a radius of 8 meters, constructed in 2018. This central feature stands out prominently within the design.  
 Site Development History:

- The site was initially a flat riverside area before construction began in June 2017. The first construction phase occurred in the middle of this space, where a small, circular, elevated structure was built.
- By mid-2018, the land had been cleared and levelled, with the outer circle completed first. Following June 2018, more sections were marked out, and the full-fledged antenna system was rapidly developed.
- Throughout 2018, additional circular divisions were completed, and the antennas were systematically installed in their respective positions, forming the comprehensive structure seen in the image.

Inference:  
 The physical features seen were similar to those of SIGINT systems around the world, which suggests that this might be a circularly disposed antenna array (CDAA) system used for high-frequency direction finding (HFDF).

Criteria	Circularly Disposed Antenna Array (CDAA)	Observed Geometry in the Image
Concentric Circles	CDAA often have multiple concentric rings of antennas for signal reception from different directions.	The image shows at least two concentric circles with evenly spaced antennas.
Radial Symmetry	CDAA exhibit radial symmetry to allow equal signal coverage in all directions.	Radial symmetry is present, with lines dividing the circle into equal sectors.
Uniform Spacing	Antennas in CDAA are usually uniformly spaced around each concentric circle to ensure even signal distribution.	Antennas are evenly spaced along the rings in the observed structure.
Sector Division	Sectors created by radial lines in CDAA may correspond to specific signal directions or coverage areas.	The radial lines create sectors, potentially representing directional segments.
Design Complexity	CDAA can be very complex, with multiple rings and varying distances between antennas for precise signal capturing.	The observed structure appears more straightforward, with two main antenna rings and straight radial lines.

Table 1 Compares the observed geometry of typical CDAA (compiled from various sources of documents) and the object identified near the firing range. The CDAA system, created during the Cold War, is a tool used to intercept and locate signals. The US military has widely used it to find signal sources worldwide. The Soviets also developed similar systems back then. The CDAA works best between 3 and 30 MHz using two circles that scan signals in all directions to find the best way to intercept transmissions. This system is more compact than large antenna farms, which need much space and must be moved around in different directions. Many countries have used this system, and recent studies show that China is now using old World War II tools to find and listen to signals from various directions. One study, mentioned in a CSIS document, highlights China helps to build such a facility in Cuba to listen to military activities in the United States. Since the HFDF system relies on skywave propagation through the ionosphere, it can intercept signals over vast distances, sometimes spanning continents. In the meantime, another site connected to SIGINT has

been identified and is referred to as Site-B. Site B



Figure 18 shows a semi-circular feature related to signal intelligence. Images credit: Maxar & Google Earth.

A facility with a control centre in the middle and three semi-circular boundaries containing antennae is located between the firing range and the CDAA system. It is approximately 4 km from the firing range and 1.3 km from the CDAA system, at an elevation of 3800 m. The first construction phase began in early 2017, during which the control centre was being developed and the road connecting this site from the highway was laid out. The satellite image of May 2018 shows that construction was halfway completed, but it was expedited and finished by the end of 2018. The control centre is covered with high walls, indicating its importance. Communication dish antennas are also present.

Main Structure:  
 – A rectangular central building, likely housing control equipment, sits at the top of the image, surrounded by a perimeter fence with road access from the upper left.

Antennae Layout:  
 – Multiple antennae extend from the central structure in a radial pattern, forming clusters that create semi-circular patterns around the facility.  
 Semi-Circular Pattern:

- The antennae are organised in semi-circles:
- Inner Semi-Circle: The first semi-circle closest to the building contains approximately nine evenly spaced antennae.
  - Middle Semi-Circle: The second semi-circle contains approximately 18 antennae, extending further outward.
  - Outer Semi-Circle: The final, outermost semi-circle contains around 33 antennae, making the rods longer and covering a wider area.
- Orientation:
- The central structure is positioned at the top (North), with the antennae spreading in a fan-like formation toward the southern part of the installation (facing south).
- Number of Antennae:

- The three semi-circles collectively contain approximately 60 antennae, with increasing length as they move outward. Overall Layout:

- The radial pattern suggests the array is designed for focused data collection, possibly for military, astronomical, radio frequency monitoring, or scientific research purposes. Inference:

Given the physical features of the antenna array, there are some possibilities that it could be a Very Low Frequency (VLF) system. VLF systems typically require extensive infrastructure to support highly long wavelengths (3–30 kHz), often consisting of tall masts or extensive wire arrays spread over vast areas. The semi-circular arrangement of this array, with clusters of approximately 9, 18, and 33 antennae in progressively larger arcs pointing towards one direction, suggests a design for signal directionality rather than omnidirectional VLF communication. Given the size of the system, this may be designed for 1 MHz – 1 kHz; however, it may vary. The radial, organised pattern could be an adaptation to maintain precision in transmitting or receiving low-frequency signals. If this array were intended for VLF applications, the layout could represent a more modern or compact version, where multiple concentric rings of antennae help focus or distribute very low-frequency signals for specific tasks—primarily used for long-distance communication, particularly with submarines or applications requiring signals to penetrate through water or ground. Due to their low frequency, these signals are robust but limited in data capacity. Notable developments in a nearby village



Figure 19 shows the developments in the village next to the critical SIG-INT facilities over the period. Images credit: Maxar, ESRI & Google Earth. As we analyse the activities at the firing range and the SIG-INT facilities, it's crucial to consider the surrounding areas. Shigatse, a city with a significant

military presence, was previously studied for infrastructure developments at Shigatse airport, Heliport developments, and changes in its urban area. This time, we will focus on Dalongda, the nearest village to the examined sites, located just above the firing range and signal intelligence facility. Significant changes have occurred in this village over time. In 2018, a structure storage facility was constructed, and it has recently transformed into an entire military complex. This indicates ongoing developments and the establishment of supporting facilities in the vicinity.

Parting shot While firing ranges are a standard component of military operations, their significance intensifies when the People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducts activities near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India. This highly militarised area has fighter jets, UAVs, helipads, and a robust military presence. Still, it is also aligned with critical locations like the Doklam Plateau and India's 'Chicken Neck' corridor. The proximity of such sensitive regions underscores the importance of these developments. Construction and militarisation activities, particularly since 2018, align with shifting geopolitical priorities. By 2021, much of the infrastructure was completed, with further refinements observed up to 2024, including the reconstruction of targets and the introduction of new shelters and decoys. Although some equipment, such as fighter jets, may not be fully functional, electronic intelligence systems indicate ongoing operational readiness. The precise positioning of radars, shelters, and convoy targets suggests evolving tactical strategies to replicate real-world combat scenarios. The type of weapon being used in the firing range is unclear. Typically, firing ranges have targets at a distance, so it's not clear whether air-to-ground or ground-to-air weapons are being used. However, it's possible that precision weapons are being tested using UAVs and that precise ground-to-ground weapons are being calibrated.

Meanwhile, the SIGINT infrastructures mapped in the report are vital for aviation, space situational awareness, air operations, and, most importantly, military signal intelligence. These systems intercept both high- and low-frequency signals, with the HFDF capturing signals bouncing off the ionosphere and the VLF systems monitoring ground-based propagation extending as far as the Bay of Bengal, tracking potential marine and naval activities. This facility is likely part of a more extensive, global network of similar installations designed to monitor intrusions and gather intelligence on military and civilian operations. Though the exact nature of its operations remains uncertain, the infrastructure appears fully operational and continually expands. Many might wonder why China would invest in these



seemingly outdated signal intelligence systems, which most of the world has moved away from. However, recent developments, such as a 2024 CSIS report detailing China's construction of a similar facility in Cuba to monitor U.S. military activities, indicate this is part of China's broader strategy. This network of installations reflects a deliberate investment in traditional signal interception, possibly augmenting modern technologies. The proximity of this facility to critical areas near the LAC highlights its strategic importance. While geospatial data suggests it could serve as both a firing range and a signal intelligence hub, further intelligence corroboration is necessary for a complete understanding of its function. The fact that China continues to maintain and operate these facilities demonstrates their importance in modern intelligence operations, where the fusion of old and new systems provides comprehensive surveillance capabilities. The proximity to crucial military zones only adds to the significance of this installation in regional and global military dynamics. These developments underscore the PLA's extensive preparations and highlight the need for effective countermeasures. Understanding the scale and nature of these exercises is crucial for assessing the PLA's military readiness and crafting appropriate responses. This facility's presence in such a geopolitically sensitive region reinforces its role as a key player in China's strategic intelligence operations, making it a significant factor in regional stability and global security.

**Exclusive: Chinese researchers develop AI model for military use on back of Meta's Llama**

01 November 2024, [Reuters](#)

Top Chinese research institutions linked to the People's Liberation Army have used Meta's publicly available Llama model to develop an AI tool for potential military applications, according to three academic papers and analysts.

In a June paper reviewed by Reuters, six Chinese researchers from three institutions, including two under the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) leading research body, the Academy of Military Science (AMS), detailed how they had used an early version of Meta's Llama as a base for what it calls "ChatBIT".

The researchers used an earlier Llama 13B large language model (LLM) from Meta ([META.O](#)), [opens new tab](#), incorporating their own parameters to construct a military-focused AI tool to gather and process intelligence, and offer accurate and reliable information for operational decision-making.

ChatBIT was fine-tuned and "optimised for dialogue and question-answering tasks in the military field", the

paper said. It was found to outperform some other AI models that were roughly 90% as capable as OpenAI's powerful ChatGPT-4. The researchers didn't elaborate on how they defined performance or specify whether the AI model had been put into service.

"It's the first time there has been substantial evidence that PLA military experts in China have been systematically researching and trying to leverage the power of open-source LLMs, especially those of Meta, for military purposes," said Sunny Cheung, associate fellow at the Jamestown Foundation who specialises in China's emerging and dual use technologies, [including AI, opens new tab](#)

Meta has embraced the open release of many of its AI models, including Llama. It imposes restrictions on their use, including a requirement that services with more than 700 million users seek a license from the company.

Its terms also prohibit use of the models for "military, warfare, nuclear industries or applications, espionage" and other activities subject to U.S. defence export controls, as well as for the development of weapons and content intended to "incite and promote violence".

However, because Meta's models are public, the company has limited ways of enforcing those provisions.

In response to Reuters questions, Meta cited its acceptable use policy and said it took measures to prevent misuse.

"Any use of our models by the People's Liberation Army is unauthorized and contrary to our acceptable use policy," Molly Montgomery, Meta's director of public policy, told Reuters in a phone interview.

Meta added that the United States must embrace open innovation.

"In the global competition on AI, the alleged role of a single, and outdated, version of an American open-source model is irrelevant when we know China is already investing more than a trillion dollars to surpass the US on AI," a Meta spokesperson said in a statement.

## China in the Region

### China-East Turkestan

#### China wants to turn Xinjiang's vast deserts into a string of pearls

29 November 2024, [SCMP](#), He Huifeng

Millions of pearls are already being harvested in the Taklimakan Desert, as China tries to turn the arid region into a hub for aquaculture

Millions of pearls are being artificially cultivated in the deserts of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, as China pushes forward with an ambitious plan to turn the arid region into a hub for aquaculture.

The pearl farming project was first launched in 2022, but only recently attracted public attention in China when a video of a local farmer showing off a fistful of pearls went viral on social media, state news agency Xinhua reported.

Chinese authorities have been encouraging private investment in aquaculture across China's northwestern provinces since 2017, with companies using innovative techniques to convert the water inside the region's saline-alkaline lakes into artificial seawater.

Salmon, lobster, shrimp and tilapia are already being farmed on an industrial scale in lakes dotted across the Taklimakan Desert – a vast desert in Xinjiang known as the “Sea of Death” – and “produced in Xinjiang” seafood is being used by restaurants in many Chinese cities.

Now, efforts are under way to harvest pearls in the area. Investors from southern China have reportedly established a seafood breeding base in Qiemo county – in the heart of the Taklimakan – using micro-organisms to transform a local saline lake into a usable water source.

Last year, the investors began cultivating about 2 million pearl oysters, and they aim to begin selling their first pearls during the second half of 2025.

According to local media, Xinjiang's unique climate – with its huge temperature swings between night and day, and its long hours of sunshine – is excellent for pearl farming, as the pearls develop a rich lustre and texture.

The cultured pearls also have a side benefit of helping improve the water quality of local lakes, reducing water treatment costs for aqua farms in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang produced 184,000 tonnes (405.7 million pounds) of aquatic products worth 3.86 billion yuan (US\$530 million) last year, according to local government data.

By 2025, the local government predicts that the output value of Xinjiang's entire aquaculture industry will reach about 20 billion yuan.



## Uniqlo criticised in China after BBC report of CEO's Xinjiang comments

29 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Eduardo Baptista and Casey Hall

Casual wear giant Uniqlo is facing a storm of online criticism in China after a BBC report quoted the chief executive of its owner as saying the company does not source cotton from the far western region of Xinjiang. The British Broadcasting Corporation published an interview on Thursday with Tadashi Yanai, the chief executive of Fast Retailing (9983.T), opens new tab, in which it asked him if the Japanese retailer sourced cotton from the region.

The report went viral on Chinese social media platform Weibo on Friday, with several users slamming the company and some saying they would stop buying its products.

"With this kind of attitude from Uniqlo, and their founder being so arrogant, they're probably betting that mainland consumers will forget about it in a few days and continue to buy," one user wrote. "So, can we stand firm this time?"

In the interview, Yanai initially responds to the BBC's question saying, "We're not using," before interrupting himself to say he did not want to continue his answer as it was "too political".

Fast Retailing did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The issue of sourcing from Xinjiang, where rights groups and the U.S. government accuse China of abuses against the Uyghur population, has been a geopolitical minefield for foreign firms with a large presence in China.

Beijing denies any abuses in the region, the origin of the vast majority of Chinese-produced cotton.

In 2021, Uniqlo's rival, H&M, faced a consumer boycott in China for a statement on its website that expressed concern about accusations of forced labour in Xinjiang and said it would no longer source cotton from there.

H&M saw its stores removed from major e-commerce platforms and its store locations moved from map apps in China as it bore the brunt of consumer anger at companies refusing to source cotton from Xinjiang. Other Western brands such as Nike, Puma, Burberry, Adidas and more were also caught up in the controversy.

In September, China's commerce ministry launched an investigation into PVH, the parent company of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger.

In a statement it said PVH was suspected of "unjustly boycotting" Xinjiang cotton and other products "without factual basis".

PVH has said it will respond in accordance with relevant regulations, media reported.

In 2020, Fast Retailing said it did not make any products in Xinjiang. However, Yanai has refrained in recent years from discussing the subject in other media interviews, saying Uniqlo wanted to stay neutral.

China is Fast Retailing's biggest overseas market and it has more than 900 stores on the mainland. Greater China, including Taiwan and Hong Kong, accounts for more than a fifth of its revenue.

Ben Cavender, managing director at Shanghai-based China Market Research Group said Uniqlo's sales had held up well during the current weakness in its economy.

But that Chinese consumers would vote with their wallets if they felt a brand was being disrespectful to their country or culture, he added.

"It's too soon to tell if there will be lasting damage but losing even a small number of consumers over this will not be helpful, given how challenging things are for the apparel industry right now."

Asked about Yanai's reported comments at a press briefing on Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said she hoped "companies can eliminate political pressure and bad interference and independently make business decisions in line with their own interests".

## Xinjiang's forced labour: Volkswagen and Uniqlo's take a step back

28 November 2024, PIME Asia News

New supply chain regulations adopted by the United States and the European Union are forcing many companies to take a stand on the issue of Uyghur exploitation. The German automaker sold its controversial Urumqi plant "for economic reasons", but it is still renewing its business plans in China. The Japanese clothing brand says that it does not use cotton from Xinjiang.

After **BASF**, Volkswagen too has decided to leave Xinjiang, in the wake of accusations that Uyghurs have been used as forced labour in building a test track for cars. Yesterday's announcement by the German carmaker officially cites "economic reasons" related to plans to reorganise its presence in China.

This marks an important victory for groups fighting for the rights of the Muslim minority, which has been subjected to harsh repressive government policies in Xinjiang, China's westernmost province, for more than ten years.

For Volkswagen, China is a key market, currently selling four out of every 10 cars produced in its plants globally. But it now finds itself caught up in the clash between China and the European Union over tariffs on imports of electric cars, as well as with its own internal crisis.

In Xinjiang, the automaker was facing the Forced Labour Regulation adopted by the European Union on 19 November; although much less clear-cut than the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act adopted by the United States in 2021, it would still have put the Urumqi plant in difficulty.

In addition, **as AsiaNews reported** a few weeks ago, the study commissioned by Volkswagen that exonerated its Chinese subsidiary from forced labour charges turned out to be deeply flawed, since it was impossible to investigate freely in the region.

In the end, Volkswagen decided to sell the plant that it opened in Xinjiang in 2012 at Beijing's request, and the related track; both will go to Shanghai-based SMVIC, a company that deals with tests on cars produced in China.

In the meantime, the German car manufacturer has extended until 2040 a joint venture with Saic Motor, its Chinese partner. The agreement provides for 18 new Volkswagen and Audi car models to arrive on the market by the end of the decade, 15 exclusive to the local market.

The goal is to recover positions by returning to sell four million cars a year in China by 2030, a market share of 15 per cent. Far from Xinjiang, but certainly inside the People's Republic.

The sale of the German automaker's plant does not, however, end the broader question of Uyghur slave labour in products that flood markets around the world.

According to the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region, the apparel and footwear industry is one sector heavily dependent on unfree labour since Xinjiang accounts for about 23 per cent of the world's cotton production, but is also involved in making solar panel components and growing tomatoes.

Meanwhile, Uniqlo, a Japanese casual wear designer and retailer, announced for the first time that it does not use cotton from the Uyghur region in its products. This step is clearly dictated by new regulations, which are forcing many groups present on international markets to address any ambiguity concerning their workers; this is especially the case with existing US legislation, which requires companies to prove that their supply chains are not linked to Uyghur forced labour.

A few days ago, the Biden administration added another 29 groups to its Entity List, which covers companies whose imports are not allowed into the United States under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act.

Overall, more than 100 companies have already been excluded from the US market suspected of using Uyghur forced labour, in sectors ranging from agriculture and mining to steel and digital technologies.

Uniqlo's statement is significant because its founder and president Tadashi Yanai had always refused to speak on the matter, until now that it, claiming that he wanted to remain "neutral" in the trade war between the United States and China.

The Japanese's company strong presence in the Chinese market weighs heavily on what might happen, especially since it has more stores in China than in Japan itself. This has raised fears that that its stance on the Xinjiang issue might have negative repercussions, sparking, for example, nationalist boycotts, like with other major brands in the sector.

### **Great wall of Taklamakan: China surrounds its largest desert with giant green belt**

28 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Victoria Bela

#### **Just completed multi-decade project in Xinjiang region is intended to help prevent desertification and boost local economies**

China's largest desert, and the world's second-largest sand-shifting desert – is now surrounded by a green belt of various trees and shrubs, as well as a solar-based sand blocking technology.

The encirclement of the Taklamakan Desert in China's northwestern Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region – an area about the size of Germany – is meant to prevent sandstorms and protect local infrastructure, as well as boost regional economic opportunities.

The green belt – which stretches 3,050km (1,900 miles) – was completed on Thursday after the final batch of several types of vegetation was planted in Yutian county at the desert's southern edge, according to state media.

Sand-shifting deserts like the Taklamakan are dominated by wind-driven sand dunes and frequent sandstorms, which can affect weather, agriculture and human health.

About 85 per cent of the 337,600 sq km (130,350 square mile) desert is covered by shifting sand dunes, earning the Taklamakan the label "sea of death".

"The wind and sand action on the edge of the desert is extremely strong, and the sand dunes expand outward," Lei Qiang, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences Xinjiang Institute of Ecology and Geography, told state-owned news site The Paper.

Lei said the effort to "lock" the edge of the desert using green belts and solar-based sand control measures such as solar panels, would protect the ecology while safeguarding railways and roads.

It took 40 years to construct the first 2,761km of the green belt. In November last year, efforts were begun to close the remaining 285km around the desert, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

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An army of 600,000 people worked to plant species such as desert poplar, red willow and saxaul trees to complete the final stretch of the belt.

Lei said some of the species, such as the medicinal plant desert hyacinth, could produce economic spin-offs.

Green belts are being deployed around the world to combat desertification and desert expansion, such as the Great Green Wall initiative, which stretches 8,000km across Africa's Sahara Desert.

In 2022, a new rail link – the [Hotan-Ruoqiang railway](#) – went into service to help integrate the desert region with the rest of the country.

The 2,712km loop is the world's first circumnavigation of a desert and now connects various cities around the Taklamakan, transporting minerals and specialities like walnuts and red dates to the rest of China.

In October, the China Three Gorges Corporation announced plans to build a new energy project in the Taklamakan to supply 8.5 gigawatts of solar and 4GW of wind power, according to another report by The Paper.

Construction is expected to be completed within four years and complement energy storage and coal-fired power projects.

Xinjiang has abundant sources of clean energy including solar and wind, and in the first half of this year it ranked first in China for installed capacity of new energy, according to the State Council.

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Now that the Taklamakan Desert green belt is completed, Lei said work would continue to improve its efficiency and quality.

### Uyghur exiles accuse Xinjiang's leader of repression beyond borders

26 November 2024, [VOA](#), Kasim Kashgar

Exiled members of China's Uyghur minority group accuse Beijing of human rights violations and say the Communist Party chief in the Xinjiang region where most of them are from has been more heavy-handed in his approach toward them than his predecessor.

Members of the largely Turkic Muslim minority group said they had hoped Ma Xingrui, with his technocratic background, might moderate the region's hardline stance, but three years into his current position, observers said the opposite is happening in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in northwest China.

"Under Ma's watch, arbitrary detentions have persisted, and forced labor has expanded, especially in Belt and Road projects," said Abduweli Ayup, a Norway-based Uyghur activist. China's Belt and Road Initiative is a global infrastructure and trade endeavor that has lasted for more than 10 years.

Ayup also said that under Ma, 240 Uyghurs who sought refuge in cities such as Shanghai and Beijing were forced to return to Xinjiang.

"These individuals were arrested and forcibly returned to Xinjiang, where their fates remain uncertain," Ayup told VOA, citing information from trusted sources from China.

Obtaining and verifying information from inside China has been challenging due to the government's tight control over communications and the people's fear of repercussions for disclosing sensitive details.

Despite the risks, Uyghurs from within and outside of China rely on discreet networks and encrypted messaging to get the word out, often at great peril, according to Ayup and other exiles.

Activists said they notice during Ma's tenure, he has not only upheld but intensified the internment of over 1 million Uyghurs, turning temporary detentions into long-term imprisonments.

The United States and Canada have accused China of genocide. The European Union and rights organizations have condemned China's policies against the Uyghurs and described Beijing's approach as crimes against humanity.

Chinese authorities deny allegations of repression in Xinjiang, framing their policies as efforts to combat "terrorism, extremism and separatism."

"China is a law-based country. Judicial departments handle cases in accordance with law," Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, wrote in a response to a VOA request for comment.

### Repression extends beyond Xinjiang

Observers said Beijing's narrative sharply contradicts firsthand accounts and international reports that accuse China of human rights abuses, including mass detentions and cultural erasure.

Some Uyghurs have tried to move out of Xinjiang and away from the scrutiny of Chinese officials within the region. But the crackdown has spilled beyond Xinjiang's borders, targeting Uyghurs in other parts of China, Ayup said.



One such case involves Irpan Yarmemet, a Uyghur content producer who was arrested in Shanghai in September for traveling to Turkey eight years ago to study. Ayup said Yarmemet was living in Shanghai for fear of arbitrary detention in Xinjiang. After his arrest,

he was detained in Xinjiang. It is unknown whether he is charged or convicted of a crime.

"His hopes of staying safe by avoiding Xinjiang were dashed," Ayup said. "The recent arrests and forced returns show that the crackdown under Ma Xingrui has no geographical boundaries."

#### **The human cost**

Uyghur exile Madina Mehmet, now living in the Netherlands, said leaving China was a matter of survival.

In 2012, she enrolled at Beijing Foreign Studies University but was forced out after just a year.

"They kept pressuring me to remove my headscarf," Mehmet said. "They wouldn't let me live in peace. I couldn't take it anymore."

She eventually secured a university scholarship in Turkey, where she lived and studied for eight years. She then moved to the Netherlands. However, Beijing's reach continued to haunt her.

"While I was in Turkey, Chinese officials demanded proof that I was a student there," she said. "Even now, they interrogate my mother in Urumqi, asking for my address and details about my life in the Netherlands." Urumqi is Xinjiang's capital.

Mehmet said her relatives have also been scrutinized for their travels. She said almost a decade ago, her sister, Mihray Mehmet, cousin and aunt had either studied or traveled to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, all countries Beijing has deemed sensitive.

In late 2021, Madina Mehmet said, the three women were detained in Urumqi. They were falsely accused of being "connected to terrorist organizations," said Mehmet.

Rights groups reported that Uyghurs who had visited a sensitive country prior to 2017 would be scrutinized for possible arrests and interrogations.

"My sister was an exceptional student," Mehmet said of her sister, who was attending Xinjiang Medical University when her academic aspirations were derailed by state harassment over her headscarf.

"Teachers humiliated her by forcibly removing it in front of her classmates," Mehmet said. Mihray Mehmet eventually left university to study in Egypt — a decision later used to justify her detention.

VOA asked the Chinese Embassy in Washington about Mihray Mehmet's case, and Liu responded by saying, "I have not heard about the case you mentioned."

Last year, Madina Mehmet's aunt was released from detention, but her sister and cousin were sentenced to at least seven years in prison.

"They've committed no crime," Mehmet told VOA. "My sister's children — just 3 and 5 years old when she was arrested — are growing up without their mother." Despite the risks of speaking out, Madina Mehmet refuses to stay silent.

"I want the Chinese government to release my sister and cousin," she said. "They deserve to be free, to raise their children, to live without fear."

#### **Targeting prominent Uyghurs**

Rehmutulla Semet, the vice chair of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Xinjiang and a prominent real estate developer, was also a target of China's Xinjing policies. He was sentenced to 19 years in prison in 2021 on charges of "assisting terrorist activities" and "gathering a crowd to disrupt public order," according to a source who requested anonymity out of fear of reprisal.

Sources close to Semet fear retaliation and request not to be revealed but told VOA the charges are false. They said he was targeted due to his ethnicity, social status and wealth.

Since Ma's arrival in Xinjiang, Semet's assets, valued at more than \$400 million, have been seized. Some of his assets were auctioned off on platforms such as Douyin, China's domestic version of TikTok.

"One of his signature buildings, the Gold Coin Hill Building, a high-rise in Urumqi, was among those auctioned off," a source told VOA. "He owned similar buildings in other major cities in the region, all of which were officially confiscated by the government this past August."

Ayup said such prosecutions are part of a broader pattern of stripping influential Uyghurs of their wealth and silencing dissent.

Mehmet and Ayup are part of a growing number of Uyghur exiles who are calling for international accountability and action.

"The world must act — justice for Uyghurs is long overdue," Mehmet said.

#### **School Stampede In China's Xinjiang Injures 14**

18 November 2024, [Barron's](#)

A stampede at a middle school in China's northwestern Xinjiang region has left 14 people injured, according to local authorities.

The incident occurred at around 3:25 pm (7:25 am GMT) on Monday at the No. 8 Middle School in Kashgar, a statement on a social media account affiliated with the city government said.

A student fell in front of a door as pupils were moving between a dormitory and a teaching building, "causing a stampede", the statement said, without giving further details.

It said three people were "seriously injured and are being treated with all-out efforts".

A further 11 people were "lightly injured and are being kept in hospital for observation".

Authorities are investigating the cause of the incident, the statement said.



Located around 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles) from Beijing, the ancient Silk Road city of Kashgar is the cultural heartland of China's Uyghur minority.

The ruling Communist Party is accused of committing grievous human rights abuses against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang, which the United States and lawmakers in some other countries have called a "genocide".

Beijing vociferously denies the allegations, arguing that its policies in Xinjiang have helped to curb religious extremism and boost economic development.

### Trump's China Hawks Are Also Uyghur Advocates

15 November 2024, [Foreign Policy](#), Amy Mackinnon and Lili Pike

The president and his advisors might clash over human rights in China

U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's selection of two outspoken critics of China's crackdown on Uyghurs to serve in top foreign-policy roles in the next administration has been welcomed by Uyghur advocates. But it could also serve as a future flash point with the president-elect.

Sen. Marco Rubio, Trump's nominee to serve as secretary of state, and Rep. Mike Waltz, his national security advisor, have both sought to use their clout as lawmakers to condemn China's persecution of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in its northwestern Xinjiang region.

"Having engaged with both offices, I'm hopeful for the future," said Rayhan Asat, a human rights lawyer as well as a senior legal and policy advisor with the Strategic Litigation Project at the Atlantic Council. Asat is of Uyghur heritage, and her brother, Ekpar Asat, is imprisoned in China. "Their strong records in leading and sponsoring legislation on Uyghur rights speak for themselves."

In 2021, Waltz called for the United States to boycott the Beijing Winter Olympics the following year over China's human rights record, likening the event to the infamous 1936 Summer Games that were held in Nazi Germany.

Rubio has long been a champion of human rights in China. He co-sponsored the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act in 2021, which assumes that all goods from Xinjiang are produced using forced labor, unless proven otherwise, and bars them from being imported to the United States. It is widely regarded as the U.S. government's most assertive action to date to address the repression in Xinjiang, which has seen more than a million people detained since 2017. The Chinese government stopped publishing data on the number of prosecutions in Xinjiang in 2021.

"He is a sturdy, sober member of Congress who has worked for a long time on China and human rights issues," said Sophie Richardson, who served as the China director at Human Rights Watch from 2006 to 2023.

Beijing sanctioned Rubio in 2020 alongside Texas Sen. Ted Cruz and others in response to the United States sanctioning Chinese officials over human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

Although the first Trump administration took a number of important steps to respond to China's crackdown in Xinjiang, including issuing sanctions and designating it as a genocide, such actions seem to have been driven by administration officials as opposed to the president himself. Rubio's and Waltz's strong convictions on human rights in China could thus prove to be a point of tension in a second Trump administration.

John Bolton, one of Trump's former national security advisors, said in his book *The Room Where It Happened* that during a 2019 meeting between Trump and Xi, at which only the two leaders and their interpreters were present, the U.S. president told his Chinese counterpart that his efforts to incarcerate the Uyghurs was "exactly the right thing to do," according to the U.S. interpreter. Trump has denied the allegation.

In 2020, Trump told *Axios* that he had held off imposing U.S. Treasury sanctions on Chinese officials involved in the crackdown out of concern that doing so could disrupt ongoing trade talks. At the time, the Trump administration had put export restrictions on Chinese government entities and Chinese companies deemed complicit in the abuses in Xinjiang as well as visa restrictions on Chinese Communist Party officials deemed responsible, but it had not yet taken the step of applying harsher Treasury Department sanctions.

Trump had also that week signed into law the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, which requires the president to file a report to Congress identifying all individuals responsible for the human rights abuses in Xinjiang, in order to determine future sanctions.

"There were certainly people in the administration who I think cared about these issues deeply," said Richardson, who is now a visiting scholar at Stanford University's Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, "but I think the president's posture certainly undercut the credibility that the administration could expect on human rights."

Another wrinkle for Rubio and Waltz is close Trump ally Elon Musk, whose electric vehicle company Tesla has a "gigafactory" in Shanghai and opened a showroom in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, in 2022. Rubio condemned the latter at the time, writing on X, "Nationless corporations are helping the Chinese Communist Party cover up genocide and slave labor in the region."



## Uyghur advocates press for stronger enforcement of forced labor laws and Xinjiang recognition

13 November 2024, [The Print](#)

After President-elect Donald Trump's victory, leaders within the Uyghur American community are urging the US to refocus on the human rights violations in Xinjiang, the north-western region of China where Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities have faced severe oppression.

Advocates are calling on Trump to build upon his administration's earlier actions on behalf of Uyghur rights, citing the positive impact of his first-term policies in challenging China's abuses. Under Trump, the U.S. officially classified China's actions in Xinjiang as genocide, imposing sanctions on Chinese officials and entities linked to widespread human rights violations, including mass detentions, forced labour, and sterilizations as reported by Voice of America.

Despite China's denial of these allegations, framing its policies as efforts to combat extremism and terrorism, Nury Turkel, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and former chairman of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, highlighted the strong bipartisan support for Uyghur rights in the US. According to the report he emphasized that these issues have broader national security implications, noting, "Uyghur rights concerns extend beyond typical human rights issues. They have profound national security implications tied to America's long-term economic and strategic security." Turkel expressed cautious optimism that the incoming Trump administration would continue its efforts, building on key actions such as the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act and the genocide designation.

He stated, "I am hopeful that the new administration will take meaningful actions to address the urgent issues facing Uyghurs, as it did in the past."

Uyghur American leaders are urging the Trump administration to further intensify sanctions on Chinese officials and entities implicated in the abuse of Uyghurs, aiming to strengthen the US response. Turkel anticipates that additional sanctions will help confront these atrocities.

The report further stated that Rushan Abbas, executive director of the Campaign for Uyghurs, also stressed the need for robust enforcement of the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act of 2021. He argued that addressing the ongoing genocide is not only a foreign policy issue but also a matter of preventing U.S. complicity in China's use of forced labour.

"Uyghurs are suffering a genocide, and Americans must understand that addressing this atrocity isn't just about foreign policy; it's about stopping the US from becoming complicit by purchasing Chinese goods linked to forced labour," Abbas said.

He added, "It's about preventing China from using Americans' hard-earned money to further its imperial goals and weaken the United States, while also resisting foreign pressure on US soil."

Salih Hundayar, prime minister of the East Turkistan Government in Exile, echoed similar sentiments, urging the Trump administration to formally recognize Xinjiang, or East Turkistan, as an occupied nation.

He argued that an independent East Turkistan would challenge China's growing dominance in Central Asia and the Indo-Pacific, thus protecting both American and global interests. Hundayar also proposed the appointment of a special US coordinator for Uyghur issues, signaling strong US support for Uyghur and minority rights in the region.

Despite these calls for action, Uyghur American advocates remain concerned that economic and strategic ties with China could overshadow human rights concerns.

Turkel noted that various advocacy groups have shaped the U.S. response to Uyghur issues, with climate activists seeking closer collaboration with China on environmental matters, pro-engagement China experts urging a more conciliatory approach to US-China relations, and business interests concerned about the risks of heightened tensions.

"These pressures have led to a more measured stance on Uyghur-related policies," Turkel said.

He added that while acts like the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act under the Biden administration were steps forward, broader geopolitical and economic concerns often overshadow Uyghur rights.

In addition to addressing human rights violations within China, Uyghur American leaders are calling for action against China's transnational repression, particularly covert operations aimed at intimidating Uyghur Americans.

Abbas emphasized the need for swift US action to counter these repressive tactics, including China's covert police stations and agents that monitor and intimidate Uyghur Americans and Chinese dissidents living in the US. He also urged the administration to prioritize securing the release of Uyghur detainees in China.

"China continues to detain Uyghur American family members and community leaders as a means of silencing Uyghurs living abroad," Abbas explained, noting that many are forced to self-censor to protect their loved ones. He called for a strong US effort to secure the release of these detainees and put an end to the repressive tactics used by China against the Uyghur diaspora.

## China uses London travel show to promote its narrative of Xinjiang in the West

08 November 2024, [RFA](#), Erkin Tarim

### Human rights groups criticize the move, noting that Uyghurs there still face abuse by Beijing.

China used a London travel show to promote its narrative of Xinjiang in the West and encourage tourism in the far-western region, despite the government's ongoing repression of the nearly 12 million mostly Muslim Uyghurs who live there.

The event sparked criticism from human rights activists, who have spoken out against Beijing's efforts to falsely show foreign visitors that Uyghurs in Xinjiang are thriving.

The Bureau of Culture and Tourism of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region staffed a booth called "Xinjiang is a good place" at the World Travel Market trade show in London on Nov. 5-7.

Attendees could learn about "the most magical charm of Xinjiang" and "experience the diverse ethnic culture," said a description of the booth on the trade show's website.

Staff handed out coupons for hotels, scenic spots and ski resorts to participating guests to encourage more international visitors to travel to Xinjiang, a report in the Chinese state-run *Global Times* said.

The exhibition was part of a larger presentation on "high-quality tourism development in China."

Rights groups, including the Uyghur Human Rights Project based in Washington, have denounced such trips as "genocide tourism," accusing China of sanitizing its violations of human rights in the region. They have cautioned Western travel companies not to participate in this kind of tourism and criticized the World Travel Market for providing a platform for China to portray a whitewashed image of the situation in Xinjiang.

Rights groups also have accused the Chinese government of using the event as a stage to cover up and justify what the U.S. government and the parliaments of several Western countries have deemed a genocide and crimes against humanity.

Their accusations are based on credible reports of widespread and systematic human rights violations, including mass detentions, cruel and inhuman treatment or punishment, forced sterilizations of women, and the forced separation of children from their parents.

Nicholas Bettles, head of strategic partnerships at World Travel Market London, declined to comment. The trade show's press officer, Becca Krug, did not respond to an email request for comment.

### Portraying Xinjiang as 'great success'

Henryk Szadziewski, research director at the Uyghur Human Rights Project and co-author of a report on tourism in Xinjiang said China was using the travel fair

to try to show the world the "success" of its "Xinjiang policy" in stabilizing the region.

He said this was the first time China sent Xinjiang tourism officials to the World Travel Market, which holds six annual business-to-business events across four continents.

The Chinese government uses tourism as a proxy to show visitors "very carefully curated parts of the region and then reporting back to the world that the region is now a great success," Szadzieski said.

More than 10 domestic tourism enterprises from Xinjiang along with eight other Chinese provinces and cities, made their debut at the World Travel Market, China's *Global Times* reported.

"As 'China Travel' heats up thanks to visa-free policies, Xinjiang welcomes visitors to experience its magnificent landscapes and appreciate the beauty of the region," Guli Abulimu, director of Xinjiang's Department of Culture of Tourism, was quoted as saying.

The *China Daily*, another state-run media outlet, said "the intangible cultural heritage, literary and creative products, and tourism brochures showcased at the Xinjiang booth captivated numerous international exhibitors, immersing visitors in the allure of Xinjiang."

"Their enthusiasm and keen interest in Xinjiang's tourism offerings sparked collaborative efforts to further enhance the region's appeal," the report said. Radio Free Asia called China's National Tourist Office in London, but staffers refused to comment on the criticism by human rights groups.

A staff member working at the trade show dismissed rights groups' warnings about travel to Xinjiang amid the repression of Uyghurs there as "misleading news from certain media outlets."

Rahima Mahmut, the U.K. director of the World Uyghur Congress and executive director of the group Stop Uyghur Genocide, said showcasing Xinjiang at the World Travel Market was part of the Chinese government's image-building campaign.

"For the past seven years, the Chinese government has been widely seen as carrying out genocide," she said. "In an attempt to counter this perception, they claim there is no such thing happening and invite people to take a tour to see the 'real' Xinjiang."

"They argue that Uyghurs have their own culture, speak their own language, and sing their own songs," Mahmut said. "In reality, they are creating false narratives to try to repair their image."

### Civil group calls for accountability from China over human rights violations in Xinjiang

04 November 2024, [Jurist](#), Matteo Piccioli

The International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) [recalled](#) on Monday the need for further action

to hold China accountable for grave rights violations in Xinjiang.

The ISHR calls for the Chinese government to ensure timely implementation of the recommendations made by the the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in addition to permitting investigations in the region. It also calls on the UN Human Rights Council to install a “monitoring and reporting mechanism on the human rights situation” to ensure the participation of UN bodies for transparency and the protection of human rights.

In its August 2022 landmark **report**, the OHCHR affirmed that the Chinese government had committed serious human rights violations through an anti-terrorism law system that imposes restrictions with discriminatory components on Uyghurs. The report holds China accountable for “restrictions on religious identity and expression, as well as the rights to privacy and movement,” which hinders the human rights protected under international law.

The allegations of cases of disappearances of members of the Uyghur and other Muslim ethnic minority communities in the Xinjiang region grew in 2017. A year later, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances reported a surge of cases of re-education of Uyghur members with the pretext of “countering religious extremism” in the region.

China has, since the publication of the report, denied and rejected the allegations. Its allies similarly argued that the allegations are an “interference in China’s internal affairs.” Raphaël Viana David, ISHR’s China program manager responded:

It is deeply regrettable when States engage in double standards and fail to uphold universal human rights. We are dismayed that while 60 States from the global South were prepared to express solidarity and support a Pakistani-led statement regarding Israel’s abuses in Lebanon, 80 States from the same world region were prepared to abandon such principles and the rights of Uyghur Muslims and other minorities by signing statements which greenlight China’s grave human rights abuses.

Recently various states have also remarked on the need for further action to ensure human rights protection. The OHCHR released a statement in August 2024 updating information on the initial assessment. In this report, the UN agency recognized again the government’s inaction to protect human rights and the persistence of wrongful policies. Similarly a month later, a group of countries labelled as the “Xinjiang Core Group” released a joint statement urging China to free “all individuals arbitrarily and unjustly detained in Xinjiang, urgently clarifying the fate and whereabouts of missing family members, and facilitating safe contact and reunion.”

## China-Hong Kong

### China resumes multiple-entry visas for Shenzhen travellers to Hong Kong

29 November 2024, [Reuters](#)

China has eased visa restrictions for Shenzhen residents visiting Hong Kong, allowing multiple entries into Hong Kong per year beginning from Dec. 1, Xinhua reported on Friday.

Each stay is for up to seven days, the official news agency said, with the multiple-entry visas valid for one year at a time.

The announcement reinstates a multiple-entry policy from 2009 that was tightened in 2015 when China began allowing Shenzhen residents to go Hong Kong only once a week.

The stricter policy was aimed at quelling anger in Hong Kong over traders making trips up to several times a day to take advantage of lower taxes by buying goods for resale in the mainland.

Hong Kong said the resumption of the more lenient entry policy is expected to benefit a number of tourism-related industries such as retail and catering. Hong Kong leader John Lee had proposed further enhancements to Beijing on mainland residents’ tourism visits to Hong Kong in a policy address last month pledging measures to boost the city’s economy. Advertisement · Scroll to continue

Visa rules for residents in Zhuhai, another city in southern Guangdong province, were also eased, allowing once-a-week entry to Macao for trips of not more than seven days. This would take effect on Jan. 1, Xinhua said.

Zhuhai residents were previously allowed entry to Macao once every two months.

### Hong Kong’s AI efforts connect China and rest of the world amid geopolitical tensions

27 November 2024, [SCMP](#)

Chief technology officer at Hong Kong Productivity Council says city remains an important launching pad for international AI firms

Hong Kong plays a major role in the artificial intelligence (AI) industry in terms of connecting mainland China and the rest of the world amid geopolitical headwinds, according to a senior executive at the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC).

“At the moment, we are artificially creating a barrier between the US and mainland China, and that will stifle the development of technology,” Lawrence Cheung Chi-chong, HKPC’s chief technology officer,

said in an interview on the sidelines of an AI conference organised by the council on Tuesday.

“A lot of times for us, we don’t know whether we should reach out to our Western counterparts to work with them,” Cheung told the South China Morning Post. “Because even if they have interest to work with us ... they may not have the freedom to [do so]. And that is sad in a way.”

“So from a scientist’s point of view, it has been difficult over the past few years, particularly in the AI area,” he said.

Cheung’s comments reflect how Hong Kong, in recent years, has been caught in the crossfire of trade tensions and escalating tech rivalry between the US and China.

Washington in August last year announced plans to restrict US firms from investing in Chinese companies, including those in Hong Kong and Macau, in three areas: semiconductors, quantum computing technologies and certain AI systems.

Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu last month said that Washington’s plan to clamp down on outbound investments in China would also harm US businesses and residents, citing the US\$271.5 billion the country had earned through trade with the city over the past decade.

Lee warned that the US will ultimately “reap what it sows”.

Nvidia, the world’s leading supplier of AI processors, has already been barred by Washington from selling its most advanced chips to China, which has left many domestic tech firms scrambling to find alternative products.

From July 9, ChatGPT creator OpenAI had developers on the mainland and in Hong Kong blocked from accessing its services.

Still, Cheung pointed out that Hong Kong remains an important launching pad for international AI firms looking to access the Chinese market and for mainland companies that aim to expand overseas.

HKPC – a statutory body under Hong Kong’s Innovation, Technology and Industry Bureau – has also been pushing for AI to be adopted across local industries such as manufacturing and logistics, according to Cheung.

He said HKPC is currently developing an AI model named Industrial GPT, which aims to incorporate “sufficient industrial data”, making it useful for small-to medium-sized manufacturers in Hong Kong. Industrial GPT, which is expected to be ready in one to two years, will be trained at the AI Supercomputing Centre at Cyberport.

“At the moment, I think we will be using both [Chinese and Western computing solutions to build Industrial GPT],” Cheung said. “But we’ll see how the current geopolitical situation will develop and pan out.”

The Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, a Hong Kong-based AI research centre under the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said last week that it has advanced the development of its medical AI models by using Huawei Technologies’ Ascend processors, as access to Nvidia’s high-end chips remains restricted.

### **From VOA Mandarin: Beijing redefines ‘Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong’**

27 November, [VOA Mandarin](#)

A senior Chinese official has reinterpreted the principle of "Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong," a cornerstone of the "one country, two systems" framework established during the 1997 handover. Zhang Yong, deputy director of the Legal Affairs Committee of the National People’s Congress of China, said Tuesday that Hong Kong’s governance involves not only its residents but also the Central Government in Beijing.

See the full story [here](#).

### **Anti-China separatists in HK sentenced, sending clear message to West’s interference**

22 November 2024, [Global Times](#), Lawrence Ma

The sentencing of the 45 separatists sends a very clear and unequivocal message to those 2019 rioters and their supporters that national security should be taken seriously, and I am sure they will be deterred. I am confident that these former participants will certainly think twice in the future when they are tempted by financial reward or enticed by a foreign power to endanger national security.

### **Hong Kong democracy activist Jimmy Lai denies inciting hatred towards China in trial**

21 November 2024, [Hindustan Times](#)

Pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai said on Thursday he was against violence and had not sought to incite hatred against China and Hong Kong authorities by calling for protests to defend basic rights, speaking in his second day of testimony in a landmark national security trial.

Lai, 76, a British and Hong Kong citizen and a founder of the now-shuttered pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, is considered one of the most high-profile prisoners under a national security law imposed by China in June 2020.

Lai is testifying in the same week a Hong Kong court sentenced 45 leading democracy activists to jail terms of up to 10 years under the same law.



Under questioning, Lai was asked about three articles, including one he wrote in 2019 in which he warned that if an extradition law was passed, another "June 4th massacre" could happen in Hong Kong referring to the killings by Chinese soldiers of demonstrators in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Lai told the court he had feared Hong Kong's rule of law would be compromised if a proposed law allowing extraditions to mainland China were enacted, and so called on people to come out and protest.

Lai denied seeking to incite hatred against the Chinese government.

"I just convinced them to come out and demonstrate," he told the court. "No, I didn't ask them to, you know, there's no hate here, no hatred here."

Earlier, Lai sought to counter allegations that he colluded with foreign forces chiefly the United States "to impose sanctions or blockade, or engage in other hostile activities" against the Hong Kong and Chinese governments.

Lai has pleaded not guilty to two charges of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and a charge of conspiracy to publish seditious material. If convicted, he could face up to life imprisonment under the national security law.

He has been detained in solitary confinement since December 2020.

Lai was also asked on Thursday about a series of WhatsApp messages he wrote in 2020 in the run-up to the national security law. The messages regarded an executive order by then U.S. President Donald Trump to eliminate special treatment for Hong Kong given moves by authorities to smother the city's autonomy. Lai admitted sending to his colleague and friends via WhatsApp a copy of the executive order.

At the time, Trump also said he would impose sanctions on people behind the crack-down.

Lai denied asking Apple Daily's ex-associate publisher Chan Pui-man to compile a "shitlist" of Hong Kong officials who should be sanctioned.

"That would be ridiculous," he told the court, when asked whether he asked former Democratic Party chairman Lee Wing-tat to make such list.

On the first day of his testimony, Lai denied seeking to use his international connections to influence the policies of other governments, including the U.S., towards China and Hong Kong.

Lai also told the court that while he supported peaceful protests, he was against violence of any kind. He also said he went into the newspaper business given his belief in the core values of Hong Kong, namely the rule of law and desire for freedom.

"The more information you have, the more you are in the know, the more you are free," he said.

The U.S. government has condemned Lai's prosecution and called for his release, with his case shaping up as a possible point of friction between the

United States and China when Trump returns to office in January.

### **China's vice premier vows to boost Hong Kong competitiveness, says stimulus push has 'benefited' the city**

19 November 2024, [CNBC Africa](#)

Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng on Tuesday vowed to boost Hong Kong's competitiveness by investing in the city's innovation and delivering supportive financial policies.

Speaking at the third Global Financial Leaders Investment Summit, hosted by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, He reiterated Beijing's commitment to "explore and implement" measures aimed at building Hong Kong as an "international financial center." That's according to CNBC's translation of his spoken Mandarin.

Beijing's stimulus measures have already "benefited" Hong Kong, said He, who oversees a key economic and financial policymaking body. "The upward trajectory of the economy is more certain."

To strengthen its financial industry, Hong Kong needs to leverage measures from mainland China as well as its global connections, Li Yunze, minister of China's National Financial Regulatory Administration, said in a panel following He's speech.

Almost 80% of mainland businesses that seek an offshore listing would go to Hong Kong, Li said, stressing the city's future "has always been intertwined with" China.

During the same panel, Wu Qing, head of China's securities regulator, said that Hong Kong will continue pursuing policies that attract more foreign investment. Some of the world's largest banks have moved to scale back operations and cut jobs in Hong Kong and mainland China amid a prolonged dearth in listing and deal-making activities.

An exodus of capital made the city's Hang Seng the worst-performing major index last year, marking fourth straight years of decline. And Hong Kong's stock market saw proceeds from initial public listings (IPOs) and follow-on share sales shrink 16% in the first six months this year, compared to a year ago, according to LSEG data.

Still, operators of Hong Kong's stock exchange have pointed to signs of pickup in the third quarter as Beijing unveiled a raft of stimulus measures to bolster its flagging economy.

Vice premier He, a close confidant of President Xi Jinping, has been tasked with tackling China's government debt crisis and protracted property downturn, which have strained the regions financial stability and stunted economic growth momentum.



Earlier this month, Chinese authorities took further steps to attract foreign investment, including lowering the capital threshold for foreign investors holding a non-controlling stake in an enterprise. Under the new regulations, foreign individuals are now allowed to invest in publicly-listed companies.

PBOC governor Pan Gongsheng also said in a meeting on Nov. 7 that that China would continue to implement accommodative monetary policy and bolster ties between domestic and foreign financial markets. Representatives from 11 foreign institutions including HSBC, Standard Chartered and Citigroup attended that meeting, according to a statement.

### Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng urges Hong Kong to be 'self-assertive' on 3 paths to reform

19 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Cannix Yau and Fiona Sun

#### State leader says city should deepen financial reforms, expand cooperation and opening up and dovetail with national developments

Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng has pledged Beijing's backing for Hong Kong to strengthen its standing as an international financial centre, urging the city to be self-assertive amid geopolitical uncertainties and to press on with reforms as he set out three directions to unleash its full potential.

Opening the three-day Global Financial Leaders' Investment Summit on Tuesday, the state leader spelled out three areas of focus for Hong Kong's financial sector. First, it should deepen reforms and innovate to boost competitiveness; second, expand cooperation and opening up; and third, dovetail its plans with national developments to further strengthen the foundation of Hong Kong's future financial development.

"The unprecedented changes in the world are accelerating. Global political and economic landscapes are undergoing profound adjustments. There are more and more variants and uncertainties," he said.

"Regardless of how the external environment changes, we will focus on ourselves. We [will] respond to external uncertainties with self-assertiveness.

"It is hoped that Hong Kong will make use of this critical period, understand changes accurately, respond to them scientifically, and seek them out proactively."

He added that Hong Kong should embrace and uphold the "Lion Rock Spirit", a reference to a well-known symbol of the city's resilience.

"Be enterprising, work hard for continuous enhancement in financial development, and continue to consolidate and enhance [the city's] status as an international financial centre," he said at the landmark industry summit for the world's top financial leaders.

Speaking at the summit too, a panel of top mainland financial officials highlighted Hong Kong's key role in the opening up and development of the mainland, stressing much more could be done to boost its standing.

Among them, Wu Qing, the chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission, revealed that commodities might be added to stocks, bonds, options and wealth management products currently tradeable on the Connect scheme, a mechanism that allows global investors and mainland players to tap into each other's markets via Hong Kong.

Discussions at the summit, organised by the city's de facto central bank, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, were set against the backdrop of growing uncertainties about the global economy and Sino-US ties with Donald Trump as the next president. Another key underlying concern centred on Hong Kong's attempts to overhaul its economy and restore investor confidence after sluggish growth was revised downwards to 2.5 per cent for this year.

With several top Chinese regulatory officials attending the summit, investors were also watching for signs of Beijing's next moves to re-energise the country's economy, after an announcement earlier this month discussed a massive stimulus package to tackle local debt and property woes.

The vice-premier began by setting out all that the mainland was doing to boost Hong Kong's financial sector, from improving the policy environment to supporting more quality enterprises to list in Hong Kong.

It would also expand mutual market access for stocks, bonds, financial management and interest rate swaps and consolidate its position as a global offshore renminbi centre and improve the mechanism for regular issuance of treasury bonds, among a host of measures, he said.

"To accelerate the development of our country into a financial powerhouse requires Hong Kong to become an even stronger international financial centre," he said.

On reform and innovation, He said Hong Kong was already known for being innovative and stressed that being "steadfast on the path" was "the only way to make further progress".

He emphasised the central government's support for Hong Kong in its effort to strengthen the banking sector, promote inclusiveness and attractiveness of the capital market, expand the bond market and enrich offshore renminbi offerings.

It also supported the city's efforts to deepen its international asset management centre and wealth management centre capabilities and go bigger on new industries such green finance, fintech and data finance and family office business.

On expanding cooperation and opening up, the state leader pointed out that internationalisation was a distinctive advantage of Hong Kong under the “one country, two systems” model of governance and its common law system, adding that the city must attract talent to its shores.

“We have to draw on the experience of financial reform and the city remains at the forefront of financial development,” He said.

The vice-premier also highlighted Hong Kong’s prominent links with the rest of the world and its strategic advantages, advising the city to leverage its unique ability when it came to opening up and attracting foreign capital.

“Hong Kong has our support in its bid to keep its characteristics, give full play to its strengths, develop more exchanges with the world, expand international financial cooperation, leverage on emerging markets, and attract more international capital, first-class organisations and talent to come.”

On dovetailing with national developments, the vice-premier assured that central authorities would strengthen the foundation of Hong Kong’s financial development as the city linked the rest of the country to the outside world, and again emphasised its prominent strategic position.

He pointed out that central authorities had supported Hong Kong’s enhancement of its role as an international investment and financial platform for the Belt and Road Initiative and as a key node in terms of capital flows.

The state leader called on Hong Kong to make good use of the Greater Bay Area to enhance and expand its financial services. The bay area refers to Beijing’s ambitious initiative to turn Hong Kong, Macau and nine mainland cities into an economic powerhouse.

In their speeches, the state leader and top mainland financial officials were upbeat about Hong Kong’s prospects, offering messages to bolster its standing and coming a few months after Beijing adopted a milestone resolution at its third plenary session in July to further deepen reform and advance Chinese modernisation.

Li Yunze, the minister of the National Financial Regulatory Administration, said: “We will do our job as the regulator as we faithfully implement policies and measures to support Hong Kong’s long term prosperity and stability.”

He added that the administration would encourage more mainland banks and insurers to set up their headquarters in Hong Kong.

“[Stimulus measures] are paying off,” said Zhu Hexin, the deputy governor of the People’s Bank of China, adding that authorities would continue to create a favourable business environment for foreign investors and business leaders coming to the country.

Among those in the audience was Qi Bin, the former vice-president of China’s sovereign wealth fund, who has been newly appointed as a deputy director of the central government’s liaison office in Hong Kong.

Commenting on his Facebook page, Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu, who was en route home from the Apec meeting in Peru, welcomed He’s remarks, saying they reflected Beijing’s support for Hong Kong as an international financial centre.

“The government will use this summit to tell Hong Kong’s story to international financial leaders, and will continue to reform the financial sector, consolidate and enhance Hong Kong’s status as an international financial centre, and give full play to Hong Kong’s unique advantages of being backed by the motherland and connected to the world,” he wrote.

At the summit, Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po said Hong Kong was seeking opportunities everywhere, including by joining hands with sister cities in the bay area.

“We’re building on strong foundations. Hong Kong is blessed with world-class scientific research capabilities, a vibrant start-up network and growing technological collaborations in the Greater Bay Area,” he said.

Chan also sought to dispel misconceptions about the outflow of funds, saying bank deposits in the city had risen by more than 13 per cent, or US\$250 billion, since the beginning of 2022 until September this year while investors from overseas accounted for more than half of its total assets under management.

He later pledged on his Facebook page that he would continue to spearhead financial regulators and relevant government departments to fully implement He’s three suggestions with a view to actively contributing to the nation’s financial development.

Analysts said the vice-premier’s remarks showed the central government’s firm support in strengthening the city’s status as a global financial hub and restoring investors’ confidence.

Regina Ip Lau Suk-yee, convenor of the Executive Council, the government’s key decision-making body, said Hong Kong should get on with reform because the speed of development was slow and the cost was still too high.

“We can’t rely on just one old trick – mass tourism. We must upgrade and enhance Hong Kong’s own attractions,” she said.

Ip said Hong Kong was still a long way behind New York in terms of the “breadth and depth” of its financial market. “We need to do more work to promote the vitality of our stock markets and connectivity with global capital markets,” she said.

Lawmaker Johnny Ng Kit-chong said He had a clear upbeat message, urging Hong Kong to consolidate its status as an international financial centre.

“He emphasises the importance of Hong Kong to Beijing, which is beneficial to restoring foreign investment and investors’ confidence.”

### **After long legal battle, Hong Kong's 47 democrats brace for sentencing**

18 November 2024, [Reuters](#), James Pomfret and Jessie Pang

A Hong Kong court will this week sentence 45 democratic campaigners in a major national security trial, with potentially heavy jail terms poised to further damage the financial hub's once lively pro-democracy movement, critics say.

In May, 14 of the 47 democrats were found guilty of the charge of conspiracy to commit subversion, and two were acquitted. Earlier, 31 had pleaded guilty, hoping for reduced sentences.

The U.S. has described the trial and its guilty verdicts as "politically motivated", opens new tab, while demanding the defendants be released.

Hong Kong authorities say the legal process has been impartial, while condemning critical comments from Western democracies as baseless and "malicious smearing".

On Tuesday, three national security judges hand-picked by the government for this trial will conclude the legal saga that began with the democrats' arrests in January 2021. Jail terms are expected to range from several years for participants to possible life imprisonment for principal offenders.

The charges of conspiracy to commit subversion followed unofficial primary elections held in July 2020 to maximise the democrats' chances of winning a majority in an upcoming legislative council election.

The convictions have silenced some of the most popular and determined pro-democratic voices, according to an examination of social media posts and interviews with lawyers and relatives of half a dozen defendants.

"This case has swept away the entire pro-democracy camp in Hong Kong," said Emilia Wong, the girlfriend of one of the defendants, Ventus Lau.

Prior to the trial, the democrats had existed in the space promised when Hong Kong returned from British to Chinese rule in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" formula granting the city wide-ranging freedoms denied to those in mainland China.

But critics say this model suffered with China's imposition of a national security law in July 2020 after pro-democracy protests swept the city a year earlier.

### **Hong Kong leader updates Xi Jinping on city's progress at Apec summit in Peru**

17 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Edith Lin

### **Hong Kong's John Lee met Chinese president on at least four occasions during visit to South America for Apec summit**

Hong Kong's leader took the opportunity to update Chinese President Xi Jinping on the city's economy and development as they met several times during the Apec summit in Peru, with Xi offering his encouragement, the chief executive has said.

Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu also said on Saturday (local time) that Xi used the event in Lima to discuss China's agricultural development, Peru's culture and agricultural resources, and highlight the potential of the Beijing-funded Chancay Port in the South American country.

"President Xi has always been caring about Hong Kong. I have reported to him [Hong Kong's] situation regarding [the] economy and development. He is well-versed [in] our development and has given me encouragement," he said.

"We also talked about the role and contribution of the construction and the operation of the port of Chancay in Peru because it is a new development that will facilitate trade in goods, logistics and also the shipping industry. It will also help [the] supply chain."

The port is one of the Belt and Road Initiative's signature projects in Latin America. The initiative, endorsed by Xi in late 2013, aims to improve trade and economic integration spanning economies around the world.

Lee said he was "very much impressed and inspired" by his discussions with Xi and expressed gratitude for his continuous care and guidance.

Lee met Xi on at least four occasions during the Hong Kong leader's stay in Lima, where the city leader oversaw the signing of a free-trade deal with Peru and attended the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit. The pair entered the conference venue in the Lima Convention Centre together to attend the Apec Economic Leaders' Retreat with representatives from other economies.

Before the meeting started, Xi and Lee were seen smiling and chatting. They also sat next to each other at a round table discussion.

As Vietnamese President Luong Cuong greeted Xi for about a minute, Lee stood to the side, listened and shook hands with the Southeast Asian leader.

Xi and Lee also flanked Peruvian President Dina Boluarte in the first row for a group photo of leaders and representatives from 21 economies. The trio had brief exchanges before the photo shoot.

During the gala dinner for Apec leaders at the Peruvian Presidential Palace on Friday night (local time), Xi

engaged in several exchanges with Lee as they watched cultural performances.

Lee also welcomed Xi upon his arrival at Jorge Chavez International Airport on Thursday (local time). The pair shook hands and had a brief exchange.

It is understood that Lee did not have separate meetings with Xi on the summit's sidelines, which is not unusual.

Financial Secretary Paul Chan Mo-po, who represented the US-sanctioned city leader at the Apec summit in San Francisco last year, chatted with Xi twice for several minutes.

Lee did not meet Xi separately during the Apec summit in Thailand in 2022, which was the Hong Kong leader's first overseas trip since taking office.

Lee told the press at the time that he had briefed Xi about Hong Kong's situation and understood that leaders had tight schedules.

In 2016, Xi met then city leader Leung Chun-ying on the sidelines of the Apec summit, also held in Peru, to warn that Hong Kong had no room for independence under the "one country, two systems" governing principle.

### **Mainland further eases travel to Hong Kong and Macao**

15 November 2024, [China Daily](#)

China has taken another step to expedite residents' trips between the Chinese mainland and the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions by introducing "certificate free" clearance for travelers.

The National Immigration Administration said in a statement on Friday it has chosen the Shenzhen Bay Port and the Gongbei Port, both in Guangdong province, to exercise the new approach.

From Wednesday, residents in the mainland aged 14 years and above, who hold a valid travel document to Hong Kong and Macao, as well as an endorsement for multiple-entry to Hong Kong or Macao, will be able to pass the two ports without showing the paperwork.

Instead, they need to undergo fingerprint and facial checks for clearance, the administration said.

The case is the same for Hong Kong and Macao residents aged 14 and above, who hold a valid mainland travel permit, including non-Chinese residents.

The measures are introduced to further facilitate travel between the mainland and Hong Kong and Macao, the administration said, adding that the measures do not apply to mainland residents who hold a permit for exit and entry for public affairs.

### **China hawk Rubio likely to take hard line on Hong Kong but Beijing well prepared: experts**

14 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Natalie Wong and Willa Wu

#### **Donald Trump's pick for US secretary of state previously had a key role in getting bills against Hong Kong passed**

Marco Rubio, picked by US President-elect Donald Trump to be the country's top diplomat, is expected to amplify Washington's hawkish policies toward Hong Kong even as Beijing is better prepared to mitigate the potential impacts, analysts and officials in the city have said.

The 53-year-old Florida senator, named by Trump on Wednesday as his choice for secretary of state, was previously sanctioned by Beijing and is banned from entering the country. He is one of China's harshest critics in the US and was behind bills to sanction Hong Kong officials and close the city's trade offices on American soil.

With another China hawk joining the incoming administration, political observers and officials said they expected that Trump's top picks would lead Washington to step up confrontations with Beijing in a variety of areas.

Rubio, also an outspoken politician on Hong Kong affairs, is likely to adopt a tough stance in potential talks with the Chinese government regarding jailed former media tycoon Jimmy Lai Chee-ying.

"Rubio will be a key executor of foreign policies of Trump, who sees China as a major rival in semiconductors and other technologies," said Wilson Chan Wai-shun, co-founder and director of policy research at the Pagoda Institute think tank.

"He is likely to amplify certain policies, for example sanctions and restrictions, to cover Hong Kong and maximise the impacts [to contain China]."

Rubio paying attention to Hong Kong issues was widely known since 2014, when he supported protesters in the Occupy movement calling for greater democracy. The movement paralysed parts of the city for 79 days. The Republican senator had called on the Obama administration to "make clear to China that it must abide by its international commitments regarding Hong Kong's status".

At the height of the 2019 anti-government protests in Hong Kong, Rubio wrote an op-ed published in The Washington Post, saying the US should not "watch from the sidelines" and had "more than just a 'nuclear option' of ending Hong Kong's special status under US law".

Rubio also played a key role in steering the Hong Kong Human Rights and Democracy Act through Congress in 2019, passed via a fast-tracked process with bipartisan support. The bill reviewed the city's special trade relationship with the United States and allowed for the

sanctioning of mainland Chinese and Hong Kong officials deemed to have undermined human rights.

The senator was in turn sanctioned twice by China in 2020. The first instance was in retaliation for US measures against senior mainland officials over the treatment of the Uygur ethnic minority group. The second was after mainland and Hong Kong officials were sanctioned following Beijing's imposition of the national security law in Hong Kong.

Chan, an international relations expert, said China's sanctions against Rubio would prompt him to adopt a tougher stance during possible appeals to Beijing regarding the high-profile cases of Lai and the 47 activists accused of violating the national security law. Forty-five of the 47 opposition figures have been found guilty of taking part in a conspiracy to commit subversion in relation to their roles in an unofficial primary election four years ago, and will be sentenced on Tuesday.

Lai is expected to take the witness box the next day to defend himself against foreign collusion and sedition charges in a separate case.

"As a top China hawk familiar with Hong Kong's advocacy in the Senate, Rubio must be a key person to be involved in any potential high-level talks. Already sanctioned by Beijing, he will have no reservations in pushing his agenda," Chan said.

Before he was elected, Trump had vowed that he would "100 per cent" get Lai, the imprisoned founder of the defunct Apple Daily newspaper, out of the country.

Chan said he also expected that Rubio would help Trump in plugging the trade "loophole" of Hong Kong, seen as a key port to bypass US sanctions against authoritarian regimes.

He added that Rubio would put more Hong Kong companies on the US' trade restriction list, known as the Entity List, for violations against regulations that prevent dual-use technologies from reaching Russia. Lawmaker Rock Chen Chung-nin predicted that Hong Kong would experience some "spillover effects" from the new US administration's policies targeting China.

"Possible attacks from the US on Hong Kong might include undermining the city's status as an international financial centre and placing more restrictions on Hong Kong businesses to invest in their market," he said.

But Chen said the outlook for Hong Kong was not all gloom and doom as the country was well-prepared for possible anti-China tactics from Trump's return to office.

Apart from restrictions on trade, Rubio was also behind several other bipartisan bills relating to Hong Kong, including one that facilitated Hongkongers securing refugee status in the US in response to the national security law, and another that could lead to

the closure of Hong Kong's three economic and trade offices in the country.

The bipartisan Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office (HKETO) Certification Act, which passed the House in September, must now clear the full Senate, Congress' upper chamber, before it can be sent to Trump to be signed into law.

Regina Ip Lau Suk-ye, convenor of the government's key decision-making Executive Council, said Rubio's views were based on "fundamental misunderstandings" about Hong Kong and its high degree of autonomy as enshrined in the Basic Law, the city's mini-constitution.

She urged Rubio to visit Hong Kong after he was appointed to lead the US State Department, to see the true situation in the city rather than relying on the views of a small minority of Hongkongers who had a "twisted" view of the "one country, two systems" governing principle.

Ip, also a lawmaker and chairwoman of the New People's Party, earlier said she was planning a visit to Washington next year and hoped to meet local officials and US Congress members.

## China- Mongolia

### Heavy Jail Sentences Against Falun Gong Practitioners in Southern Mongolia

05 November 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), Yang Feng

Amid claims of legal irregularities, two men got respectively seven and seven and a half years for keeping books of the banned movement in their homes.

We should not become accustomed to it. Spending seven years or more in a Chinese jail just for practicing one's faith and (perhaps) sharing it is not "normal." Considering also how prisoners of conscience are mistreated in Chinese prisons, these verdicts are just unacceptable. Yet, they are now so frequent that the world scarcely pays attention.

Trials are also conducted in a cavalier way. This was the case for two Falun Gong practitioners of Yakeshi City, Inner Mongolia, Sun Wentian and Guo Changsuo, sentenced respectively to seven and a half and seven years in jail after a strange trial.

Sun and Guo were part of a group of six Falun Gong practitioners whose houses were raided by the Yakeshi City Public Security on April 8 and 19, 2023. Police claimed that they found "several" Falun Gong books in their homes. Although a list of the books was never provided, the police claimed that the number of books indicated the detained practitioners intended to distribute them to others, which called for heavier penalties.



While four women were prosecuted separately, the two men, Sun and Guo, were tried in the Yakeshi City court and received their sentences on September 23, 2024. That defense arguments were not examined seriously was something so obvious that even the Hulunbuir Intermediate Court had to agree uncharacteristically with the defendants and order a retrial.

However, the retrial ended with the sentences confirmed. The defendants appealed again but this time the Hulunbuir Intermediate Court did not hold a public hearing. It decided in chambers on September 23, 2024, that the appeal was rejected.

This decision remained unknown to the defendants' relatives until last week. They hired lawyers to know more but they were told that they cannot visit their clients at the Yakeshi City Detention Center.

The case was plagued by repeated irregularities. The only certainty is that Sun and Guo should spend long years in jail just for having being caught with Falun Gong literature in their homes.

## China- Nepal

### Nepal Foreign Minister to visit China tomorrow to lay grounds for PM Oli's visit

27 November 2024, [ANI](#)

Nepal's Foreign Minister, Arzu Rana Deuba, is set to embark on an official visit to China from tomorrow, Nepal's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Wednesday. The Ministry said that Rana will be holding a meeting with Chinese counterpart during her three-day visits along with the preparatory talks about Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's expected visit on the first week of December. "Foreign Minister is scheduled to hold a bilateral talk with Wang Yi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China on 29 November 2024. The two leaders will have comprehensive discussions on matters of mutual interest between the two countries including the preparation of the upcoming official visit of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli to China," the release stated. Nepal PM Oli is expected to visit China from December 2, which he had announced during a public gathering in the capital Kathmandu last week. It comes at a heel when debate about signing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) pact needs to be signed or not. The Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML government, led by Prime Minister Oli himself, have not been able to build trust over the issue. Nepali Congress, the largest party in the federal parliament and the ruling coalition member on Wednesday also advised Prime Minister KP Sharma

Oli to proceed cautiously with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), arguing that the projects should not increase Nepal's debt burden. The party conveyed this message during a high-level meeting held at party president Sher Bahadur Deuba's residence in Budhanilkantha on Wednesday. Top Nepali Congress leaders, including Foreign Minister Arzu Rana, Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak, and party spokesperson Prakash Sharan Mahat, were in attendance.

Mahat, who served as Foreign Minister when Nepal signed the BRI Framework Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2017, clarified the Nepali Congress's stance to reporters after the meeting. "We have no reservations about implementing BRI projects," he said. "But taking on unsustainable debt is not acceptable. The projects must align with the country's financial capacity and long-term interests." Nepal has identified nine projects under the BRI, including tunnel construction, road development, and a railway connection to the northern border with China.

Mahat said that the Nepali Congress is in favour of seeking assistance from China, including grants and technical support, but warned against dependency on loans that could strain the national economy. Highlighting Nepal's delicate geopolitical position, Mahat stressed the need for balanced foreign policy. "China is Nepal's neighbour, and we must maintain excellent and friendly relations with them. However, agreements should prioritize Nepal's national interests, ensuring long-term benefits for the country," he said.

The BRI initiative, introduced by China in 2014, is an ambitious global infrastructure project aiming to enhance connectivity. Nepal became part of the initiative after signing the MoU on May 12, 2017. However, concerns about the financial implications of such large-scale projects have been a point of debate among policymakers. President Deuba and other senior Congress leaders reiterated the importance of Nepal maintaining strong ties with both China and India, focusing on agreements that bolster national interests regardless of changes in political leadership. The Nepali Congress's recommendations now rest with Prime Minister Oli, who holds the authority to make the final decision on moving forward with the BRI projects. As Nepal navigates its involvement in this ambitious initiative, balancing opportunities with economic prudence will remain a key challenge.

## Nepal readies new BRI deal ahead of PM's China visit

26 November 2024, [The Kathmandu Post](#), Anil Giri

Chinese Ambassador Chen irked by Prime Minister Oli's public remarks on loans, media's debt trap accusations.

Seven years after the signing of the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Nepal and China could ink another framework for cooperation on the BRI during Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's upcoming visit to China in the first week of December.

A Cabinet meeting on Monday approved the China visit of Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba, which starts Thursday. She will be accompanied by some foreign ministry officials during the visit and meet Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday in Beijing, according to a minister.

Nepal and China had signed the first framework (Memorandum of Understanding) on the BRI in May 2017, but not a single project under it has been implemented. The new framework will prevail over the 2017 agreement in case of disputes or conflicts.

Both sides are now preparing to sign the second framework, an extended version of cooperation document that explicitly focuses on seeking grants from China to fund the projects identified therein.

A top government official told the Post that the document which was prepared by the four-member Nepali Congress and CPN-UML taskforce has landed for final approval at the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This Nepali version of the framework on jointly building BRI projects has inputs from various government agencies and the Nepali Congress in particular.

"If Prime Minister Oli and Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba agree to it, the text prepared by the Nepali side will be sent to the Chinese side for final approval. If they also approve, the document will be signed during Oli's meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on December 3 or 4," said the source. Prime Minister Oli, who is under pressure even from within his party, other leftist parties, and China itself, to sign a BRI-related agreement, has now set aside the BRI implementation plan initially proposed by the Chinese side in early 2020. Instead he has prepared this new counter document titled "Framework for Cooperation on jointly building the BRI," which will be shared with the Chinese side after the Cabinet's approval.

According to a foreign ministry official, during a meeting with Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba on Sunday, Chinese ambassador to Nepal Chen Song had criticised Prime Minister Oli and the Nepali media for commenting on various issues of Nepal-China relations.

Ambassador Chen expressed displeasure over Prime Minister Oli's remarks at a rally in Durbar Marg, where

Oli, in front of thousands of people, declared that Nepal would not seek loans from any country. Oli, at the rally on Friday, had also declared that his visit to China would be successful on multiple fronts.

The Chinese envoy was also unhappy with certain media reports in Nepal and India commenting on the latest status of Nepal-China relations, Oli's upcoming visit, and accusations of a debt trap, an official who was present at the meeting told the Post.

The manner in which the Chinese ambassador expressed his dissatisfaction prompted the Nepali side to come to some kind of agreement with China, said officials and leaders in the know. They were trying to explain why Nepal became ready to sign an amended version of the BRI implementation plan.

Oli had received a green signal from the Nepali Congress, a key ally in the government, to modify the BRI implementation plan into a new framework for cooperation. This four-member taskforce amended several clauses proposed by the Chinese side, according to ruling party leaders, who refused to divulge the actual content.

A meeting between Oli and Congress chief Sher Bahadur Deuba last Tuesday had decided to revise the text of the BRI implementation plan. The title of the document was also changed from "Implementation Plan of the BRI" to "Framework for Cooperation on Jointly Building the BRI," according to a pair of Congress and UML leaders.

Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba told the Post that the Congress and UML leaders are in the final stages of negotiations on the framework document. The agendas and joint communique of the visit are yet to be finalised.

Prime Minister Oli is scheduled to visit China on December 2, while Foreign Minister Deuba will head for China on Thursday to lay the groundwork for his trip.

On Monday, Oli consulted former prime ministers and foreign ministers at his office and sought advice on Nepal-China relations. While most spoke in favour of strengthening ties with China and maintaining balance with neighbours and major powers, they did not offer any concrete suggestions for the visit.

They were divided on the type of cooperation and assistance Nepal should seek, while some advised that Nepal's focus should be on implementing past accords and agreements rather than signing new ones.

Several Congress leaders including Dr Shekhar Koirala and former foreign minister NP Saud have been saying that Nepal should not sign an "umbrella agreement" or an agreement covering "comprehensive" issues and that Nepal should not align with any powers.

According to leaders privy to the revised draft, the document retains the areas that were proposed in the BRI implementation plan, but has modified and expanded the content.

The new draft has sections on cooperation background; cooperation principles (joint consultation for common development, pragmatic cooperation for meaningful effects, market orientation with government guidance); cooperation priorities (transport, connectivity and logistic cooperation, trade industrial capacity and investment cooperation); and economic and financial sector cooperation.

Other areas covered are education, science and technology cooperation; intellectual property, measurement, standards, and conformity assessment cooperation; agriculture, forestry and water conservation sector; energy saving and environment protection; geosciences sector; customs clearance; health sector cooperation; and cultural and tourism exchange.

Both the texts—the one from 2017 and the current one—have provisions for cooperation mechanisms.

The new document prioritises grants for sovereign-initiated projects, as instructed by Oli and Deuba.

Earlier China had proposed several financing modalities for BRI projects depending on their financial viability. These included multi-channel funding, innovation of financing models and diversified financing tools.

“The two sides will explore the possibilities of implementing new and innovative project financing instruments, as appropriate, such as public private partnership and blended financing,” according to the BRI implementation plan proposed by the Chinese side.

Ahead of the visit of Prime Minister Oli to China, there was widespread interest about whether Nepal will sign the plan originally proposed by Beijing. A second issue was whether Nepal would accept loans.

Despite reservations from different quarters and communist party leaders, after intense pressure from the Congress, the prime minister had made it clear in public forums as well as during Monday’s consultations with former prime ministers and foreign ministers that Nepal is not going to take loans to finance BRI projects.

During Monday’s meeting, some former foreign ministers including NP Saud had cautioned the prime minister not to sign a comprehensive implementation plan of the BRI. “But there was a tacit understanding even within the Congress that we needed to make some kind of an arrangement on the BRI so that the party could continue in the government,” said one Congress leader. “As we have not seen the content of the new cooperation framework, we cannot comment on that.”

On the day, Congress chief Deuba had discussed the new framework agreement with Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba and Nepali Congress General Secretary Gagan Thapa. Later, the Congress chief flew to Janakpur where he reiterated that while Nepal should

accept grants under the BRI, it should avoid taking loans.

“Our debt is now 41 percent of the GDP, which is alarming,” said Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba. “The private sector can take loans but the government is not in a position to do so.”

### Security deals related to Tibet-border on agenda of Nepali PM’s visit to China

23 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

As Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli of Nepal prepares to visit China from Dec 2, proposed items on his agenda under consideration include a proposal to sign an agreement related to boundary management and security cooperation agreed during Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to Nepal in 2019, reported the *kathmandupost.com* Nov 23.

The report cited an official as saying the implementation agreement between the governments of China and Nepal on the Boundary Management System is also part of the agreement, with a copy of the proposed agreement having already been submitted to the House of Representatives.

Also on Oli’s agenda is stated to be a plan to sign a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Public Security of China and Nepal’s Ministry of Home Affairs on the establishment of a Boundary Contact System at three levels.

The Chinese side—and especially security officials from Tibet—has for long been pushing for Nepal to accept the boundary contact system at federal, provincial and local levels, the report said.

Another proposal is said to include signing a memorandum of understanding on law enforcement cooperation between Nepal and China, with provisions for Chinese support in immigration and security on the Nepali side of the border.

The reports cites a long list of items on Oli’s China visit agenda, topped by some key cross-border infrastructure and connectivity projects, including joint projects under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Among the proposals exchanged between the two sides is China’s offer of a \$20 million grant as budgetary support to Nepal, even as the latter’s Ministry of Finance expressed dissatisfaction with the amount, the report said.

The report cited officials from various ministries as saying Nepal was preparing a long list of projects to be developed under the framework of the BRI as well as other cross-border infrastructure and connectivity-related projects. This also includes implementing projects agreed during past high-level visits.

The funding modality of these projects is yet to be discussed, the report cited officials as saying, adding that the final list would be handed over to the Chinese.

Nepali Congress, the main coalition partner of Oli's CPN (UML), is known to be opposed to the latter's willingness to accept normal funding for the BRI projects being insisted upon by China, as it entails high interest rates and the danger of debt trap.

### **My visit to China won't harm Nepal's ties with India: PM Oli**

21 November 2024, Asia News

Traditionally, Nepali prime ministers have made India their first port of call after assuming office. However, after failing to receive an invitation from India for several weeks, PM Oli went to New York to attend the 79th session of the UN General Assembly where he met Indian PM Modi, Chinese FM Yi, and several other world leaders.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli said that his upcoming China visit will not hurt Nepal's ties with India.

Speaking at the concluding session of the Kantipur Conclave in Kathmandu on Thursday, the prime minister, who is set to visit China in the first week of December, stated there is no reason for his visit to harm relations with India just because he is going to China first than India.

"We are a sovereign nation and we have never said that we won't visit India," the prime minister said, adding, "We choose to go where it is convenient."

Traditionally, Nepali prime ministers have made India their first port of call after assuming office. However, after failing to receive an invitation from India for several weeks, the prime minister went to New York to attend the 79th session of the UN General Assembly where he met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi, and several other world leaders.

"I went to the US to attend the UN General Assembly because the UN is [headquartered] in the US, where I met several world leaders, but it does not mean that I wanted to visit the US first," said Oli, adding, "We are surrounded by two great neighbours and we have to maintain good relations with them."

"And my visit to China will not damage our relations with India. Our relations with India are deep, historical, based on culture and tradition, and predate the formation of modern states. We are sovereign nations and make foreign trips as per our convenience," said Oli.

Oli was speaking at the Kantipur Conclave's concluding session moderated by Kantipur Editor-in-Chief Umesh Chauhan on Thursday.

During the interaction, Oli discussed a range of domestic issues including the country's economy, national politics, issue of constitution amendment, relations between the federal and provincial governments, and the arrest of Rastriya Swatantra

Party chairman and former deputy prime minister Rabi Lamichhane, among other things.

Responding to the ongoing street protests by Rastriya Swatantra Party supporters opposing the arrest of their party chief, and the calls by some groups calling for the restoration of monarchy and dissolution of the current constitution, the prime minister said he is ready for any kind of open discussion on these issues. He said he welcomes dialogues on the future of the political system, but won't allow the constitution to be torn down.

Oli also defended the progress made over the last three decades (since the restoration of democracy in 1990), highlighting significant strides in infrastructure. "Road networks have now reached 98 percent of the country."

On the arrest of Lamichhane, who is in police custody on charges of cooperatives fraud, the prime minister stated that he cannot protect Lamichhane if he had committed wrongdoings.

"The court will look into his case...if someone makes mistakes and blames others, it is unacceptable," said Oli.

Oli also gave some background on how he had helped Lamichhane and hired him as a television anchor when he was jobless. "I gave him the job, and he later joined politics," said Oli, adding that he would not tolerate corruption.

I favoured him, but I never thought that Rabi was involved in cooperative scam," said Oli, and claimed that he was initially against forming the parliamentary probe, but Pushpa Kamal Dahal and Lamichhane himself requested such a probe.

Rastriya Swatantra Party's protests and demonstrations "aimed at pressuring the court" are unacceptable, Oli said, adding, "Let the law take its course."

The prime minister also dismissed the allegations that the government was working on a new law on political parties to facilitate party splits. "There is a void so we have to bring a new law," he said, adding "The UML does not need to be the largest party to claim the premiership." It is believed that the government wants to make party splits easier, because the UML wants to merge dissident groups in a few parties including the CPN (Unified Socialist) and the Janata Samajbadi Party into its fold.

Speaking at the conclave, the prime minister said the government will bring laws to support provincial governments.

"We will review the constitution. We will enact laws. We will provide them [provinces] the required rights."



## BRI debate drags on as Chinese envoy lobbies Congress

19 November 2024, [The Kathmandu Post](#), Anil Giri

The conundrum over signing of the Implementation Plan of the Belt and Road Initiative during Prime Minister KP Oli's upcoming China visit persists. Two key ruling parties—the Nepali Congress and the CPN-UML—remain at odds over several proposals in the implementation plan.

Besides holding regular communications with Prime Minister Oli and senior UML leaders, Chinese Ambassador Chen Song has intensified diplomatic lobbying within the Nepali Congress in order to drum up support for the signing of the implementation plan during Oli's visit, which is scheduled for the first week of December. An official announcement of the visit, however, is yet to be made.

Recently, according to Congress leaders, the Chinese envoy has met Congress Vice President Purna Bahadur Khadka, senior leaders Shekhar Koirala, Bimalendra Nidhi, and Minendra Rijal, among others, to get the desired support.

Oli and his party have expressed their intent to sign the BRI implementation plan, but the Congress remains wary about signing such a document. The party, however, recognises the BRI and is keen to develop connectivity and infrastructure projects on a project-by-project basis.

During his first visit to China in 2018, Prime Minister Oli had proposed 35 projects under the BRI and these were later whittled down to nine at China's request, an office bearer of the Nepali Congress said. "We want to follow the same modality of negotiating individual projects under the BRI, and the investment model should be decided through such negotiations," he said. Congress General Secretary Gagan Thapa said the party's position on BRI projects is clear. "Be it a loan or a grant, we prefer negotiating individual projects with China."

Several Congress leaders familiar with the BRI implementation plan document have said that Nepal should not sign any document with broader strategic and geopolitical implications.

The draft of the BRI implementation plan seen by the Post reads: "As per the understanding reached during Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Nepal in October 2021, the two sides decided to, on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the UN charter and principles of good neighbourliness, elevate Nepal-China Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship to Strategic Partnership of Cooperation Featuring Ever-lasting Friendship for Development and Prosperity."

The draft document further says "the two sides also decided to strengthen the all-round cooperation and

promote the overall development of the bilateral relations and based on consensus reached at the highest political level."

Prime Minister Oli and Nepali Congress President Sher Bahadur Deuba met on Monday to discuss the BRI implementation plan before giving their final word to the Chinese side.

Officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Finance urged the political leadership to quickly decide on the plan, with Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba heading to China on November 28 to meet her Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing on November 29. The two sides are expected to finalise the agenda of Prime Minister Oli's visit and the agreements and MoUs to be signed.

"We are waiting for the political leadership to take a final call," a joint secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. "A counter proposal will be sent, seeking some amendments to the implementation plan."

"We have reservations as the document mainly reflects Chinese priorities rather than ours. The plan should be such that we too can own it up and be able to derive tangible benefits. We want to see our projects, priorities and terms reflected in any discussion on the BRI," said an official at the Ministry of Finance, and his ideas were seconded by another official at the foreign ministry.

Officials at the two ministries said they want to narrow down differences between Nepal and China on the BRI implementation plan and propose changes in areas such as cooperation among law enforcement agencies, cooperation in science and technology, and a common position between Nepal and China in international forums.

Under the "cooperation principles" in the draft agreement, the Chinese side has proposed joint consultation for common development where both sides will uphold the spirit of the Silk Road, respect each other's sovereignty and core national interests, and work together to improve people's livelihoods through mutually beneficial cooperation.

The Chinese side has proposed several initiatives under the subtitles "pragmatic cooperation for meaningful effects" and "market orientation with government guidance" and offered to jointly develop the Trans-Himalayan Multi Dimensional Connectivity Network through the construction of ports, roads (including bridges and tunnels), railways, aviation infrastructure, telecom projects, and electricity transmission lines.

"The two sides will utilise existing China-Nepal intergovernmental consultation and cooperation mechanisms for advancing cooperation under the BRI, and carry out the China-Nepal cross border railway project, including tunnels along the roads (Kerung-Kathmandu) after the accomplishment of feasibility study," the Chinese proposal reads.



It also mentions that the two sides will cooperate on the construction of cross-border road and tunnel projects, dry ports, integrated check posts, a China-Nepal friendship industrial park, and enhance cross border economic cooperation.

During Oli's visit, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs plans to sign a memorandum of understanding for the construction of the Tokha-Chhahare tunnel project, with Nepal's Ministry of Finance and China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) as signatories.

Similarly, the Chinese side has proposed co-building the 'Air Silk Route', which will involve close communication on traffic rights agreements, the development of and opening of additional air routes, and the enhancement of aviation logistics infrastructure. "Both sides aim to expedite efforts to implement relevant transit transport agreements by improving infrastructures, procedures and coordination," said the draft plan.

Under the subtitle "Trade, industrial capacity and investment modality," the plan proposes enhancing cooperation in bilateral trade and trade infrastructure, improving border cargo facility, promoting e-commerce, promoting capacity building, and sharing best practices and innovative experiences.

"The two sides will strengthen cooperation in energy development by doing feasibility studies, building cross-border transmission lines and carrying out power trade for the utilisation of energy resources," said the plan where it is also stated that the Chinese side will facilitate Nepal's participation in the China International Import Export Expo and similar expos.

Under the title "Economic and financial sector cooperation," the Chinese side will support Nepal's development efforts under the BRI by providing financial and governmental assistance. Both sides will, under the Guiding Principles on Financing the Development of the Belt and Road Principles and green investment principles for the BRI, explore various financing cooperation modalities.

The financial institutions of the two countries will be mobilised, innovative financial models will be developed, and the opportunity for the utilisation of diversified financing tools will be explored to finance bilateral projects.

"The two sides will explore the possibilities of implementing new and innovative project financing instruments, as appropriate, such as public private partnership and blended financing," states the plan document seen by the Post.

The plan also proposes a long list of cooperation models between the central banks of Nepal and China, including the possibility of trading in local currencies for bilateral trade transactions.

Other areas of cooperation identified in the BRI implementation plan include education, science and

technology; intellectual property, measurement, standards and conformity assessment cooperation; agriculture, forestry and water conservation sector; energy saving and environmental protection; geosciences sector; customs clearance; health sector cooperation; and cultural and tourism exchange.

The Chinese side has proposed numerous new projects and programs under the framework of BRI and other forums. It also stated that the leaders of the two countries will continue to meet, and close communication will be maintained between the government sectors of the two countries at multilateral and bilateral events—an approach that, according to Nepali officials, the Nepali side has objected to.

The plan will be effective from the date of signature and will remain in effect for five years, upon the expiry of which it will be automatically renewed for successive five-year periods unless either side notifies the other side in writing of its intention to terminate it—at least three months before its expiry.

Amrit Rai, spokesman of the foreign ministry, said the status of the BRI implementation plan is under discussion at the top political level and he thus has no updates. He added that the ministry has been receiving dozens of project proposals from line ministries in lieu of Prime Minister Oli's impending China visit.

### **China's BRI rattles Nepal's ruling coalition**

13 November 2024, [The Annapurna Express](#), Kamal Dev Bhattarai

The China factor risks widening the rift between the Congress and the UML

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has once again unsettled Nepal's coalition government, formed in July. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is preparing for an official visit to China, but two key coalition partners—the CPN-UML and the Nepali Congress (NC)—remain divided on advancing BRI projects. While Oli, who leads the UML, advocates for BRI projects, the NC opposes taking loans under BRI, fearing it could lead Nepal into debt.

Since 2022, the NC has consistently communicated its opposition to financing BRI projects through loans, a stance championed by NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba during his tenure as prime minister. Conversely, the UML and other leftist factions argue that Nepal should make headway on BRI to balance its acceptance of the US-backed Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and to maintain geopolitical equilibrium.

To reconcile these differences, Prime Minister Oli is negotiating with the NC. Currently, there are three major issues regarding BRI. First is the signing of the

BRI implementation plan, which was drafted during former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal's visit to China in September last year. Second, although Nepal has proposed four projects under BRI, the coalition partners have yet to agree on an investment model. Third, Nepal has requested China to waive the loan for constructing the Pokhara International Airport, where alleged corruption in the airport's construction has also become a point of contention.

To date, Nepal has only signed a BRI framework agreement in 2017, outlining general directions for the initiative. However, debates have since persisted, particularly around China's claim that certain infrastructure projects, like the Pokhara airport, are part of BRI, a claim rejected by Dahal's administration. Additionally, Nepal wants Chinese grants for BRI projects, but China's official position states that BRI funding only involves loans, not grants, facilitated by the Chinese government. Nepal has proposed that, if loans are necessary, the interest rates should align with those of the World Bank and other international lenders.

The 2017 BRI agreement outlines cooperation in policy exchange, connectivity, trade, financial integration and people-to-people interactions. Although the agreement allows for flexibility in cooperation areas, the debate in Nepal has focused largely on infrastructure and financial arrangements.

A recent 2023 Chinese white paper describes BRI as a joint venture rather than a form of foreign aid, emphasizing collaborative development. "The principle of extensive consultation signifies that the BRI is not a solo endeavor by China, but a collaborative effort involving all stakeholders. The principle of joint contribution highlights that the BRI is not one of China's international aid programs or a geopolitical tool, but a collaborative effort for shared development."

According to the MoU signed in 2017, the BRI does not include grants and primarily involves loans, with a possible contribution from Nepal. Nevertheless, the framework agreement does leave room for mutual agreements on funding sources.

The document states: "Adaptation of appropriate modes of cooperation for mutual benefit to support development and implementation of major programs in the BRI and provisions of investment, financing and technological support for these programs through mutually agreed sources of funds, and strengthening of exchange and cooperation to ensure program's sustainability and safety."

There is also contention regarding China's integration of numerous activities under the BRI umbrella. However, the 2017 framework does explicitly include areas like cultural exchange, media, health, tourism, agriculture, parliamentary visits and cross-border exchanges—reflecting the current scope of China's

involvement in Nepal. Thus, while BRI has become a significant component of bilateral cooperation, other forms of collaboration can still occur outside BRI's framework.

Comparing China's current engagement with the BRI document, there is a common ground between the two countries. In that sense, it seems that Nepal is already a part of BRI and scores of programs are in progress under the BRI. But it does not mean that bilateral cooperation can happen only under the BRI. The document has clearly mentioned that even if the MoU signed in 2017 is terminated, it will not affect any ongoing projects between two countries.

As for the BRI implementation plan and project selection, officials indicate that these steps primarily signify another principle agreement, not one that includes financing details or loan agreements. A senior UML leader said, "It's similar to the 2017 MoU, without raising the loan concerns voiced by the Nepali Congress." Although a final investment structure may not be concluded during Oli's visit, there could be a consensus to include specific projects under BRI, though the NC may resist finalizing these agreements. The China factor is a sensitive issue that risks widening the rift between NC and UML leaders. Oli is actively engaging with NC and Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba to manage these differences. Tensions between the NC and China have escalated recently, driven by the NC's stance on alleged border encroachments in Humla and its critical position on BRI. Additionally, external pressures may be influencing the NC to limit Nepal's engagement with China, complicating the situation further. NC leaders have openly stated that BRI should also follow the model of MCC, which involves primarily US grants with minimal Nepali investment.

### Prime Minister's prioritizing of China visit becomes political issue in Nepal

18 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Nepal's ruling coalition partner CPN-UML has condemned remarks made by former prime minister and the CPN (Maoist Centre) Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal regarding Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's upcoming visit to China. The issue arises from the fact that the planned trip is a departure from the established tradition where the Prime Minister first visits the country's historical ally India after assuming office.

In an interview with Indian newspaper *The Hindu* earlier this week, Dahal claimed that Oli was "playing the China card" in relation to his planned trip, noted the *kathmandupost.com* Nov 16.

Oli is scheduled to make a five-day official visit to China from Dec 2 to 6 at the invitation of his Chinese

counterpart, Li Qiang, although an official announcement is awaited, the report said.

Oli's breach of tradition was also covered in an *indianexpress.com* report on Nov 3, and it was not clear whether he had received an invitation from India before approaching Beijing for his China trip.

The *kathmandupost.com* report cited the ruling UML party as calling Dahal's accusation "baseless, irresponsible, and damaging to Nepal's sovereignty and foreign policy".

"Nepal does not require external approval for its diplomatic relations," UML Secretary Raghbir Mahaseth, who also heads the party's foreign affairs department, has said in a statement. He has maintained that Oli's visit is a reflection of Nepal's independent foreign policy, not a "card diplomacy" as Dahal suggested.

The UML was also stated to have stressed the importance of maintaining balanced relationships with both India and China for Nepal's development and prosperity. The party has warned that Dahal's comments could jeopardise Nepal's strong and equitable ties with both nations.

Oli is seen as the most pro-China of Nepali leaders and has on occasions taken pot-shots at New Delhi, including during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The UML statement was further cited as saying Dahal's comments undermined Nepal's sovereignty and national pride, suggesting Dahal was "using political manoeuvres that compromise the nation's integrity." Still, many have described Oli's decision to go to China in his first bilateral visit after assuming office in mid-July as his preference for the northern neighbour and fear the move may irk the southern neighbour, the report noted.

In general, Nepali prime ministers traditionally chose New Delhi as their first bilateral visit after assuming the office, the report added.

"We are a sovereign nation and we have never said that we won't visit India," Oli himself was quoted as saying. "We choose to go where it is convenient."

Dahal led a coalition government with Oli's UML until he was ousted when the latter ditched it to partner with Nepali Congress and other, small parties in mid-July this year.

Meanwhile, amid reports of discord within the UML leadership, Dahal has expressed confidence that his party will be back in power again.

"Our party is the government in waiting. The government that will be formed by overthrowing this one will be ours, so there is nothing to worry about," *english.khabarhub.com* Nov 16 quoted him as saying, speaking at a meeting of the Maoists' Kavre-Kathmandu Liaison Committee that day.

### CPN-UML Condemns Former PM Prachanda's Remarks on PM Oli's China Visit

17 November 2024, [Radio Nepal Online](#)

The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) (CPN-UML) has strongly condemned remarks made by former Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal, leader of the CPN-Maoist, in a recent interview with *The Hindu*. Dahal accused Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli of "using the China card" and labelled his decision to visit China as "proof of immaturity."

In a statement issued on Thursday, CPN-UML's Secretary and Chief of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Raghbir Mahaseth, termed the comments baseless and irresponsible. He argued that they undermine Nepal's sovereignty and disregard its independent foreign policy.

The party emphasized that Nepal's diplomatic decisions are a sovereign matter and require no external validation. It further accused Dahal of jeopardizing Nepal's balanced relationships with its neighbours, India and China, with his remarks.

The statement highlighted PM Oli's leadership in maintaining Nepal's neutral and pragmatic foreign policy, which aligns with principles of non-alignment and peaceful coexistence. The CPN-UML also called on Dahal to retract his statements and apologize for what it described as a breach of diplomatic decorum.

The controversy has sparked debate over Nepal's foreign policy amid efforts to maintain balanced ties with its neighbors.

### Chinese VP offers help to overcome security challenges in Pakistan

14 November 2024, [The Express Tribune](#)

Shehbaz vows to root out terrorism from country.

**Chinese Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang offered to work with Pakistan to overcome security challenges and further expand Pak-China cooperation during a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of the COP29 Climate Action Summit on Wednesday.**

On Tuesday, Reuters quoted sources as saying that Beijing is pushing Islamabad to allow its own security staff to provide protection to thousands of Chinese citizens working in Pakistan during the bilateral talks after a car bombing in Karachi killed two Chinese engineers on October 6.

In the Baku meeting, the prime minister and the Chinese vice premier discussed bilateral cooperation in various fields. During the meeting, Shehbaz highlighted the steps taken by the government for the security of the Chinese nationals in Pakistan.

He also highlighted the steps taken by the government to completely eradicate the menace of terrorism and

reiterated that the government was committed to root out terrorism from the country, according to a press release issued by the Prime Minister Office Media Wing.

Last month's airport bombing in Karachi killed two Chinese engineers, the latest in a string of attacks against the Beijing's interests. The attacks have worried China, which has pushed Pakistan to begin formal negotiations for a joint security management system.

Reuters spoke to five Pakistani security and government sources with direct knowledge of the previously unreported negotiations and demands. "They (Chinese) want to bring in their own security," one official, who sat in on a recent meeting, said on condition of anonymity.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that the events which occurred in the recent past were the acts of terrorism, which aimed at disrupting the Pakistan-China relations and stop the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

However, he added that both the countries were in contact with each other to deal with the security related issues and agree on a framework. "It is possible for both the countries to improve the security situation of the Chinese citizens," he said.

The minister cautioned against speculations on the issues related to the security, stressing that the security system would be made more effective where necessary. "Speculations about the security of Chinese citizens must be avoided," he said.

"The Chinese citizens working in Pakistan are our guests. Providing security to Chinese nationals in Pakistan is our primary responsibility," he added. "Where necessary, the security system will be made more effective," he said.

Climate finance

Prime Minister Shehbaz visited Baku on Tuesday and Wednesday to participate in the "World Leaders' Climate Action Summit" of the 29th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29).

Addressing the summit on Wednesday, Shehbaz sensitised the global community on the risks posed by climate change and the vulnerabilities of developing countries. He called for grant-based climate finance that should not add to the debt burden of the developing nations.

"I strongly feel, that climate finance must be grant-based and not an addition to the debt burden of vulnerable developing countries. Here is the opportunity that the COP29 should make an understanding loud and clear that we will have to fulfil those financial pledges of COP27 and COP28," he said. "Ten years ago in Paris, we had failed to stop the rise in emissions and catastrophic global warming. The Paris pledges made 10 years ago have yet to see the

light of the day," he added. He highlighted the devastation faced by the people of Pakistan caused by the climate change-induced floods in 2022.

To meet the needs of the populations hit by the impacts of climate change and avert such devastations in the future, Shehbaz reiterated his call for the fulfilment of the pledges made in previous COP summits.

"Without climate justice, there can be no real resilience and I don't want other countries to face what Pakistan faced in 2022. Pakistan is a resilient, hardworking and responsible nation. We are fully committed to becoming part of the global climate solutions," he assured.

Shehbaz told the summit that Pakistan was going through a renewable energy revolution. He mentioned last year's a comprehensive National Adaptation Plan and this year's the National Carbon Market Framework.

"But we cannot do it alone. Pakistan needs international support to deliver on its climate ambition," he said. "We believe that COP29 can transform into Finance COP by restoring confidence in scaling up climate finance," he remarked.

On the sidelines of the summit, Shehbaz also held a meeting with the Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev and discussed bilateral matters with him. Later in the day, Prime Minister Shehbaz left Baku for Islamabad.

### **Nepal PM picks Beijing over New Delhi for maiden visit, urged to bolster economic ties**

14 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Bibek Bhandari

### **K.P. Sharma Oli's visit reflects Nepal's intention to strengthen ties with China and rebalance traditionally India-centric relations**



Nepal Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli is preparing for an official visit to China in early December, signalling his country's interest in strengthening ties with its northern neighbour, with experts noting its potential to rebalance Kathmandu's historically India-centric foreign policy.

Nepal's newly appointed leaders traditionally make India their first foreign trip, however, Oli did not receive the invitation from New Delhi usually extended after the formation of a new government.

Oli formed a coalition government between his Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) and the Nepali Congress in July after his predecessor Pushpa Kamal Dahal, known as Prachanda, lost a vote of confidence in parliament in July.

Nepal has not officially announced the prime minister's visit from December 2 to 6, despite Beijing's invitation. The deputy chairman of Oli's party said during a meeting this week, the trip will "emphasise on implementing the high-level agreements" signed between the two countries and prioritising Nepal's national interests.

Oli's visit is being closely watched in New Delhi, though analysts say the trip is less about breaking traditions – Prachanda visited China before India in 2008 – and more about sending a signal to its southern neighbour. While Nepal has closer ties with India historically and culturally, a notable shift occurred after India objected to the country's new constitution and enforced an unofficial blockade in 2015, pushing Nepal to seek help from China for fuel.

Geeta Kochhar, assistant professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University's Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies in New Delhi, said though India-Nepal relations are "steady", issues like border disputes and nationalist rhetoric need to be addressed to prevent them from becoming long-term problems. She described India's decision not to invite Oli as a "schedule issue" of India Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who did meet Oli on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September.

"There is a certain kind of hesitancy on the Indian part to immediately invite Oli because he is always creating some theoretical or practical problems for India-Nepal relations," she said. "In the name of nationalism, he has given authority to publish new notes to China with the new map."

In October, Nepal granted a contract for printing 100-rupee banknotes with its controversial map to a Chinese company. India has rejected Nepal's map, released in 2020, with territories that Kathmandu claims as its own.

She said Nepal should balance the relationship with the two countries and gain equally from both sides in terms of economic and infrastructure development. Those issues are likely to be discussed in Oli's Beijing visit.

The two countries have agreed to several important projects, including road expansions, hydropower developments, and a railway from Tibet to Kathmandu under China's Belt and Road Initiative established in 2017. However, announcements of non-belt and road

projects as Belt and Road Initiative ventures from China have often caused confusion.

Last year, former foreign minister NP Saud informed parliament that the Belt and Road Initiative project implementation plan was "at a stage of discussion", with no projects executed in Nepal.

Amish Raj Mulmi, author of *All Roads Lead North: Nepal's Turn to China*, said while the Chinese have been clear about the Belt and Road Initiative, Nepal needs to understand that it is not project-specific but a policy mechanism.

"Nepal has not done adequate homework in understanding what the Belt and Road Initiative entails," he said. "Nepal's position that Belt and Road Initiative has to be project specific is contrary to how the Chinese have defined it."

Since signing the Belt and Road Initiative agreements, Nepal's exports to China fell annually by 16.7 per cent from US\$27.5 million in 2017 to US\$11 million in 2022, according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity. However, customs data shows exports to China increased by 77 percent in 2023, rising from US\$9.7 million in 2022 to US\$17.5 million.

Mulmi says the decline in Nepali exports after signing the Belt and Road Initiative indicates that Nepal is not taking advantage of the project's connectivity and has failed to invest economically in its relationship with China.

Mulmi also added that China should help operationalise key infrastructure projects, referring to the Pokhara International Airport built with a US\$200 million Chinese loan, which has yet to see any scheduled international flights since its 2023 opening. Local media reports indicate that Nepal is seeking to convert the loan into a grant during Oli's visit to China. "Nepal will have to take the relationship with China – this matter to India as well – beyond the political side of affairs," he said. "China relations cannot be dictated by political aspects."

Analysts say Nepal should use Oli's visit to bolster economic ties.

Huang Zhengduo, director of the Center of Nepal Studies at the Institute of South Asia Studies of Sichuan University, said Nepal has the potential to become a transport link between India and China. The proposed railway would reduce Nepal's dependence on India and help promote trade and tourism.

Huang highlighted the Nepali prime minister's domestic significance, as Oli needs Chinese resources to fulfil his development-related political promises. Choosing China for his first trip indicates Oli's intention to balance relationships with both Delhi and Beijing, Huang said.

"Oli wants to send a clear signal that China-Nepal relations are at least as important as Nepal's relations with India.



“Given the increasing involvement of India and the United States in Nepal and their desire to counter Chinese influence in Nepal, Oli’s visit to China undoubtedly represents a phased failure of these intentions.”

### **China should show magnanimity and waive off the Pokhara airport loan**

11 November 2024, [The Kathmandu Post](#)

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli is preparing to visit China in the first week of December. It will be his first bilateral visit after assuming the office in mid-July. Nepali prime ministers generally go to New Delhi first. Sudheer Sharma, former editor-in-chief of Kantipur daily, has recently published a pair of books on Nepal-China relations—‘Himalpari ko Huri’ and ‘Bhikshu, Byapar ra Bidroha’. He also frequently writes on Nepal’s relations with its two big neighbours. The Post’s Thira Lal Bhusal sat down with Sharma on the eve of Oli’s China visit.

**Prime Minister Oli is all set to visit China next month. Many find it curious that he decided to go to Beijing first before visiting New Delhi. How do you see this development?**

Traditionally, Nepali prime ministers have given high priority to visits and engagements with our two neighbours—India and China. This is natural. Generally, the prime ministers first visited India and then went to China. I believe Prime Minister Oli tried to do the same. We see regular engagements with New Delhi at various levels. Prime Minister Oli [had met](#) his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York in the last week of September. In August, Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba [visited](#) India and met Prime Minister Modi and her counterpart S Jaishankar, among other key officials there. But Delhi has yet to extend the invitation to the prime minister. So he seems to have decided not to defer his foreign visits for long and chose to visit Beijing first.

We have to see this in two perspectives. Prime Minister Oli is visiting China at the invitation of Chinese Prime Minister Li Qiang and he is also going to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping. Even in the past, Oli developed good relations with Chinese leaders. So, there are expectations that he may make the visit fruitful. An equally important concern is whether this visit impacts our relations with the southern neighbour India. I think the prime minister should focus on implementing the agreements reached during his previous visits to Beijing and during Chinese leaders’ Nepal visits. He should be mindful of not irking the southern neighbour while reaching any agreement with the northern one. I believe the prime minister is conscious of this.

**India often seems anxious about Chinese involvement in Nepal. Do you see any risk of this visit increasing the distance between Oli and India?**

Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal visited China first after he became prime minister in 2008. Even in the past, some Nepali prime ministers including Tanka Prasad Acharya went to China on their first official visit. This is not unusual. The two prime ministers—Oli and Modi—recently met in New York. India doesn’t seem ready to intensify bilateral engagements with Nepal immediately. So it is natural for the prime minister to increase engagements with China, without taking any steps that could provoke India. We should stop seeking Indian signals when dealing with China, and vice versa. We should maintain parallel relations with both the neighbours without antagonising any side.

**In this context, what should be the prime minister’s priorities during his China visit?**

We have to end our chronic problem of signing agreements and not implementing them. We make announcements and forget them. There are also some infrastructure projects China pledged to develop but there is little progress. So the prime minister should draw the Chinese leadership’s attention and press them to complete the projects on time. Some important projects such as Mugling-Pokhara and Narayanghat-Butwal road upgradation by the Chinese side have been slow, causing hardships to people. Even such issues should be communicated to the political level. Also, there are several commitments made by the Chinese government but left unimplemented. This creates an impression that China makes big promises but doesn’t keep them.

Prime Minister Oli often highlights the Tokha-Chhahare road upgrade project under Chinese support but there is no satisfactory progress. Progress on preparing the detailed project report (DPR) on Nepal-China cross-border railway is unclear as well. Nepal expected some substantive support from China to make the Pokhara international airport financially feasible. Some concrete steps are needed to operate this airport. There are reports that the government has requested China to convert the loan taken to develop the airport into a grant and the prime minister will push for this during his visit. It will be an achievement if the prime minister succeeds in this.

**In the course of writing your recent books, you extensively interacted with Chinese officials and experts, as well as with their Nepali counterparts. What are the major factors delaying the projects? Is it lack of preparation on the Nepali side or is there any problem on the Chinese side?**

First, we [Nepalis] sign agreements but don’t work seriously to implement them. This is true in the case of agreements with other countries as well. We are negligent. Red tape is another problem. Third, China

gives less priority to small countries like Nepal as it has so many big issues with other countries. We have to constantly follow up with them to speed things up. In the past, the two sides [agreed](#) to open more border points. This should be expedited. The people-to-people relations on the border areas were historically based on social interactions at the community level. People used to trade, marry those from the other side and interact in various ways. Of late, despite progress on infrastructure development, social engagement has been hindered. This should be rectified and new border points should be opened at Dolpa, Mustang, Gorkha, Dolakha, Taplejung, and Sankhuwasabha. We should think beyond the Capital-centric approach. This will help strengthen relations at the people's level and give alternatives in our connectivity. We should put connectivity at the core of our relations with the two neighbours.

In the past decade, we have made good progress in improving connectivity with India. A study report has been prepared on the Raxaul-Kathmandu railway project. We are building an expressway linking Kathmandu and the southern belt of the country. Integrated check posts (ICPs) have come into operation along Nepal-India border points. Cross border electricity transmission lines have been built and we have increased energy trade with India. We have thus progressed in deepening connectivity with India. We lack reliable north-south highways. Therefore, the prime minister should make connectivity a major agenda of his China visit.

**Given the lacklustre performance of past projects, can we be optimistic about big cross-border infra projects under Chinese help?**

Nepal and China have committed to run some projects under the Trans-Himalayan Multi Dimensional Connectivity Network (THMDCN) concept. A key component of this concept is to upgrade connectivity between Kathmandu and Kerung that includes roads as well as a railway. The concept also envisions operating other border points. The railway project requires more study and investment and needs to consider various other factors. For now, we should prioritise opening the aforementioned border points. The Korala border point at Mustang has huge potential. Nepal is making a road that connects Mustang with the Sunauli border point with India.

Centuries ago, people from Banaras used to travel to Tibet via Mustang through this route. It can be revived and made a trilateral trade route between Nepal, India and China. Similarly, Limi in Humla, Olangchugola in Taplejung, among others places, can be developed as alternative routes. As far as Kerung-Kathmandu connection is concerned, let's first give priority to building a reliable highway. The railway project should be developed with a broader understanding between Nepal, India and China. Beijing will develop such a big

project only with the big Indian markets in mind. More importantly, there are some signs of improvements in India-China relations. We have to use this as an opportunity.



**Hemanta Shrestha/TKP**

**There are differences in the way we work and the Chinese do and there are systemic and linguistic differences as well. These factors are often blamed for lack of progress in development activities carried out with Chinese support. Can Nepalis work closely with Chinese, just like we do with Indians?**

Until a decade ago, several projects developed under Indian support were left in limbo. In 2015, India imposed a blockade against Nepal and that sparked anti-India sentiment. Then, India expedited several projects. This drastic change became possible as the political leadership in India realised its mistake and showed the commitment to improve things.

But the same thing is not happening with China because there is a "great wall" between Nepal and China when it comes to understanding each other. The Chinese haven't understood Nepali context. The northern neighbour should be more open and liberal in helping Nepal. Second, Nepal should also stop approaching China only when our relations with India sour. We have left this impression on the Chinese psyche. First, we should be clear about what exactly we want from China, forge consensus among major political forces and hold talks with the Chinese leaders. Then, we should be equally committed to implementing the agreements reached this way. People now take announcements of building big projects under Chinese support as propaganda. Therefore, this time the prime minister should stress on pushing the pending projects. The prime minister should tell them that even the projects announced during President Xi's visit have not progressed and that has created a bad impression of China in Nepal.

**There are some differences between the coalition partners—the CPN-UML and the Nepali Congress—about the funding modality of projects under the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI). Do you think this may cause a problem?**

The UML wants to expedite the BRI projects while the Congress has insisted that we should accept only grants and not loans under the BRI. The prime minister should clear such dilemmas and come up with common views before he leaves for Beijing. Once they come up with a common view on such key issues, it will give a positive and strong message. The Chinese side will take it more seriously because the strong government led by the two largest parties can implement bilateral agreements.

We have instances of Nepal's political parties standing for and against important projects funded by other countries. This was seen in the case of the US-funded Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), and China's BRI. Moreover, in the past, the Chinese leaders created an impression that they preferred working with communist parties and leaders. This is neither in the interest of Nepal nor of China.

**There are also discussions on signing the BRI implementation plan during the visit. What are the things Nepal should be careful about while signing BRI-related agreements?**

Trying to get grants instead of loans is in itself good. But there is no need to be prejudiced against the BRI per se. Nepal reportedly wants to include some points specifying waivers in specific projects. We should be very careful while signing project-based agreements. For instance, what will be the conditions and funding modality of a project, will it be developed under grants or loans etcetera. All our technical experts and other brains should be engaged while signing project-based agreements and specifying conditions and other nitty-gritty to ensure that we will not have unnecessary liability and debt burden in the future.



**Hemanta Shrestha/TKP**

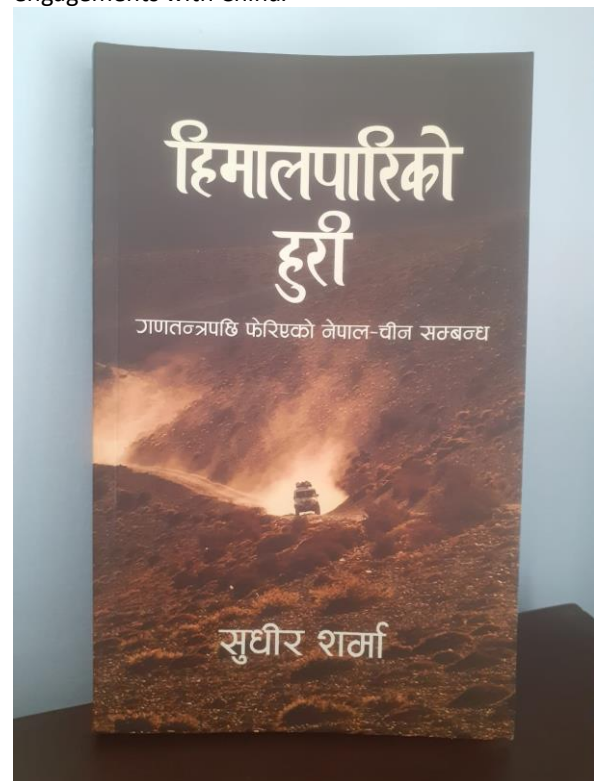
Over time, Nepal has rightly adopted a steadfast position saying that we don't join a strategic alliance proposed by any country. It stayed away from the US government's State Partnership Programme (SPP) and China's Global Security Initiative (GSI) as well as from India's security umbrella. But we can't be isolated in development initiatives. We have to take support from India, China, the US and other countries based on our needs.

**Do you think the Chinese side will show magnanimity on Nepal's requests, for instance on waiving off the loan to develop Pokhara international airport?**

Though the Chinese ambassador to Nepal last year claimed the airport project to be under the BRI, the case is different because it was signed years before we joined the BRI. And, converting that loan into a grant is not a big deal for China. They should show magnanimity given the support we have been providing to China for a long time. If you see things historically, Nepal has helped China by suppressing Khampa revolt, preventing free Tibet movements on our soil and showing a steadfast commitment to One-China policy. China, which is now prosperous, should definitely show magnanimity and waive off loan of Pokhara airport. They shouldn't see relations with Nepal through a purely transactional lens.

**In your book, you describe 2008 as a watershed after which the engagements between Nepal and China increased drastically. But why couldn't we benefit from the northern neighbour in terms of development?**

The Chinese side looks more interested in increasing engagement. They like to showcase their development before foreigners. But more than lavish hospitality, we need substantive support from the neighbour, which has emerged as the world's second-largest economy. But we should be clear about what we want from our engagements with China.



The Nepali side doesn't present its proposals clearly. On certain issues, our politicians give mixed signals. This time, if this government of two largest parties reaches a certain agreement with China and remains



committed to implement it, other forces can't hinder it. The same approach can be replicated while dealing with India, the US, Japan or other friendly countries.

### **Is difficult geography still a barrier in developing cross-border infrastructure projects and deepening relations between Nepal and China?**

In our textbooks we read that the Himalayan range is a natural barrier between the two countries. In my book 'Bhikshu Byapar ra Bidroha', I have explored and described how people from Nepal and northern India had been traversing through these mountains and there were interactions and engagements between the people in this part of the world since the 5th and 6th centuries. So, the mountains weren't barriers even at that time. Now technology has made things easier. We have to think about how to connect with these two big economies. We have multiple east-west highways. Now we need north-south highways connecting the three countries that will help us reap benefits from India and China.

At present, relations between these two countries have improved and it is an opportunity for us. We have to forge understanding with both India and China if we have to materialise big projects based on trilateral agreement. One thing we can't accept is the concept of two-plus-one (India, China plus Nepal). That is unacceptable because it downgrades Nepal to a junior partner. We need trilateral agreements to develop mega connectivity-related and other investment projects but such agreements should be made on an equal-footing between the three countries.

### **Chinese envoy: We support Nepal's infrastructure development**

08 November 2024, [The Himalayan](#), Rastriya Samachar Samiti

Chinese Ambassador to Nepal, Chen Song, expressed the Chinese government's readiness to support Nepal's development and prosperity.

Ambassador Song highlighted the harmonious relationship between Nepal and China and reaffirmed China's willingness to aid Nepal's development efforts. Speaking at a program held today at Bhawani Vidyapeeth Secondary School in Falebas Municipality, Parbat, the ambassador underscored China's commitment to assisting in Nepal's growth and progress.

He noted that since the establishment of diplomatic ties, the two countries, connected by mountains and rivers, have consistently supported each other on matters of core interest.

Ambassador Song further pledged cooperation in upgrading Nepal's road, electricity, and education sectors, adding that China wishes for Nepal to become a self-reliant, advancing nation.

He also mentioned China's readiness to operationalize the Korala border crossing and emphasized ongoing Chinese support for infrastructure development at the crossing. Song expressed optimism that the bilateral relationship would strengthen further with the opening of this border crossing.

### **China reported to have banned Nepal-Tibet borderland marriages**

05 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)



China has an issue with the people on the two sides of the Tibet-Nepal border marrying each other and has banned it but not bothered to explain why, according to [thediplomat.com](#) Nov 4. The people on the two sides of this border share ethnic, Buddhist cultural heritage and linguistic ties; but cross-border marriage doesn't exist anymore. The centuries-old borderlands marriage has been halted thanks to the Chinese side, the report said.

"Cross-border marriage was not an issue until 2008," the report quoted a Nepali local in Olangchung Gola village in Nepal's eastern Taplejung district, which borders Tibet and India, as saying. It was "halted from the Chinese side after 2012."

As a result, cross-border marriages, once the norm in Olangchung Gola, are now a rarity, the report said.

While a Nepali from any part of Nepal can marry a Chinese in any part of mainland China, Beijing has forbidden cross-border marriages between people who live in the Tibet-Nepal borderlands, within walking distance of each other, and with strong linguistic and cultural ties. Beijing has provided no explanation for this policy, the report said.

Chumbe Sherpa, a former deputy chair of the erstwhile Olangchung Gola Village Development Committee (local government), has said that previously Tibetan women were drawn to Nepal as the latter was comparatively well-developed and the source of their food and other supplies. A marriage with a Nepali man was therefore an attractive option. However, in recent decades, China has developed the Tibetan region, and the Tibetan border regions are more developed than the Nepali ones. Hence, the situation has reversed and commodities now flow into

Nepal from Riu in Dinggye County of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Almost all daily essentials being used by residents of Olangchung Gola are now from TAR and sport Mandarin characters. Olangchung Gola is closer to Riu bazaar than Taplejung's district headquarters of Phungling bazaar, the report noted.

The report also said that even meeting relatives on the Tibet side of the border had become tougher post-pandemic. "We can't go to our relatives' homes on the other side," Chhilamo Lama, whose maternal house is on the Tibetan side, has said. She has "to stay at a quarantine-like home," where her "relatives come to meet and greet" her. "This was not the case in the past," she has said.

Trade and other relationships between the two sides on the borderland continued to be excellent, however, the report noted.

Local residents as well as security personnel view the Chinese positively. Madhab Khatri, the recently deployed Border Outpost chief of Nepal's Armed Police Force has said, "Chinese counterparts often ask if we need anything from them."

"We mostly go to Riu to sell our products and buy theirs. If we can't sell all our products in the Riu bazaar, Chinese policemen purchase our unsold items," Chhilamo Lama has told *The Diplomat*.

Also, Chheten Sherpa, a local leader of the Nepali Congress and a former local government member, has said that the Chinese are helpful and are eager to have better road connectivity with Nepal. Chinese-sent bulldozers and oil tankers with Chinese number plates are visible at Olangchung Gola bazaar.

And so, the big question is, when border trade and crossings have resumed, why are traditional borderland marriages being blocked? Why are marriages between people who have to fly long distances across the Himalayas permitted when those who live just within walking distance of each other are forbidden, the report asked.

## China-Pakistan

### Pakistani exercises show how Chinese investments fuel military mission creep

30 November 2024, [The Washington Times](#)

Port, transport projects with Islamabad face attacks from local insurgent groups

China's joint, three-week, anti-terrorism exercise in Pakistan, which kicked off November 20, is a stark illustration of an emerging new strategic reality.

While China's Communist leaders build up the country's military strength to challenge the global U.S.-established world order and to become the dominant

power in East Asia, there are also more mundane reasons to beef up the power of the People's Liberation Army, such as protecting one's investment portfolio.

A major thrust of the new joint exercise is to help defend Beijing's \$70 billion Belt and Road Initiative projects, which have faced a series of deadly attacks by anti-Chinese insurgents in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

Under threat is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a massive infrastructure undertaking that includes upgrading Pakistan's north-south roads and Karakoram Highway, linking Kashgar in China's landlocked Xinjiang province directly to Pakistan's hammerhead-shaped peninsula and the port of Gwadar in Balochistan on the Arabian Sea, close to the Persian Gulf.

Drawing on Chinese investment funding through the Belt and Road Initiative, the CPEC has been expanding Gwadar's deep-water port so large Chinese vessels will have a much shorter route for shipping petroleum from the Persian Gulf back to the oil-ravenous domestic market.

Currently, oil-laden ships bound for China depart the Middle East through the Persian Gulf into the Arabian Sea, and then head south around India toward Singapore. To reach China's east coast ports, those ships must pass through the congested Malacca Strait, where U.S.-backed Singapore monitors its narrow waters.

Before docking in China, they then must sail up the South China Sea, which is the scene of mounting U.S.-China tensions and clashing claims by China and countries around the region for control of shipping lanes, strategic islands, and undersea resources.

The Pakistan corridor, however, would enable oil vessels from the Persian Gulf to stay in the Arabian Sea and unload their cargo at Gwadar for overland vehicle transport north to China's Xinjiang region.

And that in turn has sparked new tensions with the United States, which has cultivated its own ties to Pakistan and watched with alarm as China's investment and security footprint in the country have grown in recent years.

"The deepening relationship between China and Pakistan through CPEC could strain U.S.-Pakistani relations, driving Islamabad closer to Beijing," the Washington-based Newlines Institute warned in an analysis published November 14.

### Roads, ports, plants and airports

In addition to a sleek 1,860-mile highway and upgraded port, the CPEC projects at Gwadar include the construction of a new Gwadar International Airport, a desalination plant, a coal-fired power plant, container berths, and terminals for bulk cargo, grain, oil and liquefied natural gas.



To practice protecting that investment, China's People's Liberation Army sent more than 300 special operations, army aviation and logistic support troops from its Western Theater Command to the Pakistan-China Joint Exercise, Warrior VIII, which is set to run through December 11, China Military Online reported. In addition to protecting the corridor, China's troops are also being touted as a support force for Pakistan as it deals with jihadist and separatist threats within its own borders. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Nov. 20, as the exercises were just getting underway, that "China firmly supports Pakistan's effort of fighting terrorism." The 300 Chinese troops joined special operations forces from the Pakistan Army's Special Service Group (SSG).

"The exercise will focus on joint counter-terrorism clean-up and strike operations," Chinese-government-controlled Xinhua News Agency reported. "The two sides will engage in multi-level and mixed training across various specialties, and organize live troop drills in accordance with the actual combat process."

China's Ministry of Defense said in its own statement that the exercise "aims to consolidate and deepen practical exchanges and cooperation between the two militaries, as well as to strengthen their joint anti-terrorism capabilities."

The drills began at Pakistan's National Counter-Terrorism Center in Pabbi, in mountainous northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province which borders Afghanistan near the Khyber Pass canyon, Radio Pakistan reported.

The Chinese troops and their equipment arrived in batches on Y-20 transport aircraft and marched onto Pakistan's tarmac in desert combat camouflage, including steel helmets topped with what appeared to be camera and telescopic lenses, according to online news videos.

They joined bearded Pakistani forces, similarly uniformed, at a joint flag-raising ceremony before deployment, field surveys, and setting up a command post.

But there is a subtext to the exercises, as China finds its workers and projects the target of a fierce separatist force that has long clashed with the central government in Islamabad.

"Significantly, the military drills, the eighth edition between the all-weather friends, are being held amid reports that China is pressing Pakistan to permit its forces to provide security for hundreds of Chinese personnel working in the \$70 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," reported India-based Raksha Anirveda magazine which monitors defense and aerospace industries.

"The Baluch Liberation Army (BLA) along with the Islamic militant group Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) stepped up attacks against the Chinese nationals and

the Pakistan military in Baluchistan and neighboring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa bordering the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan," the magazine said.

Ethnic insurgents have been fighting for decades for impoverished Balochistan's autonomy or independence. They claim Pakistan has carried out extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in Balochistan in order to quash the rebellion, and exploits the province's natural resources while neglecting to provide the funds to develop the region's economy.

The insurgent forces have become increasingly anti-Chinese during the past 10 years, amid allegations that the province and Gwadar port will profit Beijing and Islamabad, but not Balochistan. Gwadar's port is administered by Pakistan's Maritime Secretary, and operated by the China Overseas Port Holding Co.

Hot, arid Balochistan borders similarly dry, bleak, undeveloped zones in southeast Afghanistan and southeast Iran. That Muslim-dominated triangle forms a Pakistan-Afghanistan-Iran tinderbox of competing feuds by tribes and governments.

Pakistani officials argue China's Belt and Road investments will benefit the very regions that are trying to undermine the projects now underway.

"CPEC will not only benefit China and Pakistan but will have a positive impact on Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asian republics, and the region," said the Pakistan government's CPEC Secretariat on its website.

Beijing reportedly has pressed Islamabad to allow China's security forces to have boots on the ground to protect its workers, but Pakistan instead promised to boost security.

"Pakistan has decided to launch a comprehensive military operation to curb active terrorist organizations in the country's southwest Baluchistan province, the [Pakistani] Prime Minister's Office said in a statement," Xinhua reported on Nov. 21.

#### **Difficult struggle**

Pakistan and China however are expected to face difficulty upgrading Gwadar and the CPEC highway while grappling with bloody assaults by ethnic Baloch and other separatist forces.

In October, the separatist Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed a suicide bombing that killed two Chinese engineers outside Karachi's international airport, 240 miles east of Gwadar.

"It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months," an angry Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong publicly stated after the bombing.

The earlier attack killed five Chinese engineers working on China's Dasu Hydropower Project in March when a suicide bomber rammed their convoy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

"We are solid in our commitment to the safety and security of Chinese nationals, institutions and projects

overseas,” the Chinese Foreign Ministry said at the time. “China and Pakistan have the resolve and capability to make the terrorists pay the price,” the ministry’s spokesman Mr. Lin said.

Also in March, security officials killed eight armed insurgents who were trying to enter the Gwadar Port Authority complex.

Pakistan has declared the Balochistan Liberation Army, the Balochistan Liberation Front and other Baluchi insurgents as terrorist organizations.

Balochistan’s gold meanwhile has attracted China Metallurgical Group Corp (MCC), which opened gold mining sites in 2023 under Beijing’s Copper-Gold Project in Baluchistan’s Saindak region and nearby locations.

Baluchistan’s natural resources also include oil, coal, and natural gas.

Balochistan’s insurgents “perceive Chinese investments — the CPEC, in this case — as exploitative, on the grounds that the Balochi people allegedly have not benefited from socioeconomic development or improvement in their living conditions,” Newlines Institute said. “In response, Beijing has demanded the Pakistani government conduct thorough investigations and increase security measures.”

Pakistan said CPEC, which began construction in 2015, will streamline Balochistan’s road, rail, port, air and data communication systems, attract industries and agricultural development, improve medical facilities, vocational training, tourism, and create jobs.

The ambitious investment plans have even sparked an effort by Washington not to be left behind.

In September 2023, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome “visited Gwadar’s port and met with Port Authority Chairman Pasand Khan Buledi to learn about port operations and development plans, Gwadar’s potential as a regional trans-shipment hub, and ways to connect with Pakistan’s largest export market: the United States,” the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad said in a statement at the time.

“In a meeting with Pakistan Naval West Command, Ambassador Blome discussed regional issues and emphasized a continued partnership in the years ahead,” the embassy said.

Pakistani officials say they have tried to assure the U.S. that Gwadar will remain a commercial port open to all.

### **China, Pakistan talk security as they target terrorism against belt and road projects**

28 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Meredith Chen and William Zheng

### **Top Chinese military official meets Pakistani counterpart in wake of attacks against Chinese interests in the South Asian country**

China’s top military official held security talks with his Pakistani counterpart on Wednesday amid joint counterterrorism drills in the wake of several attacks targeting Chinese interests and citizens in the South Asian country.

Zhang Youxia, vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), met Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir during a visit to Pakistan, vowing to strengthen ties as the two countries held their first joint anti-terrorism drills in five years.

Their talks focused on “regional security dynamics, measures for regional stability, and enhancing bilateral defence cooperation”, according to Pakistan’s military. The Warrior-8 joint counterterrorism exercise began in Pakistan last week and will continue until mid-December, focusing on clean-up and strike operations. China sent more than 300 troops from the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Western Theatre Command to take part, with the Chinese defence ministry saying the exercises were aimed at “testing and enhancing joint counterterrorism capabilities” and “consolidating and deepening pragmatic exchanges and cooperation” between the two militaries.

The ministry added that the drills involved “multilevel, multi-speciality integrated training” and simulating real combat scenarios.

The exercise comes in the aftermath of a string of deadly attacks targeting Chinese citizens and interests over the past year, attacks that have deepened concerns about regional security and overshadowed economic cooperation.

On November 19, when China unveiled the plan for the joint exercise, Islamabad announced a new military offensive against separatist insurgents in Balochistan.

Four terrorists were killed from November 20-22 in three separate incidents in Balochistan province, home to major projects under China’s Belt and Road Initiative, the Pakistan Armed Forces said.

Chinese military analyst Song Zhongping said joint counterterrorism exercises could deter terrorist groups and improve bilateral political and economic ties.

“China-Pakistan economic cooperation requires a strong security guarantee, as the security situation in Pakistan has been relatively complicated in recent years,” he said.

Song noted that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor – a flagship project under Beijing’s belt and road plan to grow global trade – had been particularly vulnerable to attacks and interference by local terror groups.

A suicide bombing outside Jinnah International Airport in Karachi killed two Chinese citizens and wounded another in early October. A separatist group, the Balochistan Liberation Army, has claimed responsibility for the attack.

Following the attack, China sent a task force to Pakistan and urged authorities to step up security measures and ensure the safety of Chinese citizens working on projects in the country.

The joint drill is the eighth in the Warrior series of exercises between the Chinese and Pakistani militaries and the first since 2019.

Song noted that the PLA had brought more unmanned devices to recent joint exercises, saying it was a way for China to showcase its military advancements while testing the equipment in different environments.

He added that the Ukraine war and other conflicts showed that unmanned equipment was crucial to counterterrorism operations and full-fledged military conflicts, and the PLA wanted to be a leader in this area.

On Tuesday, China concluded joint army training with Singapore focused on urban counterterrorism operations.

The drills, held in central China, featured window-breaking drones, wall-climbing robots, explosive ordnance disposal robots, and unmanned reconnaissance and strike vehicles, according to the PLA's official news portal.

Drones also featured heavily in joint exercises between China and Laos in July, according to state-owned Global Times. Those drills included training on drone countermeasures.

"China has a large amount of unmanned equipment already," Song said. "It is necessary for the PLA to test it comprehensively in combat-like environments in these joint drills so we can improve it."

Hong Kong-based military commentator Liang Guoliang said that unlike the US, which had taken a "high-end and expensive path" in its drone strategy, China "strives to develop both high-end and value-for-money drones".

"The PLA has numerous drones and robot fighters with varying performance and quality," Liang said.

"This will not only help the PLA to reduce casualties, but also greatly improve the combat effectiveness of Chinese soldiers.

"One soldier equipped with various unmanned equipment can take on many more enemies.

"By showcasing the latest unmanned weapons, China can help its neighbours to improve their understanding of the latest military tech and gain a better footing."

## Any attempt to harm Sino-Pak ties bound to fail: Chinese envoy

28 November 2024, [The Express Tribune](#)

Says China's cooperation in Pakistan's development will continue unhindered

Consul General of People's Republic of China in Karachi, Yang Yundong has said that all-weather strategic cooperation between Pakistan and China has continued to deepen under the joint guidance and promotion of President Xi Jinping and Pakistani leaders.

Speaking at the media briefing at the consulate, organised to mark this year the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, Yundong said, iron-clad friendship between Pakistan and China is everlasting and ever-refreshing. The Pakistan-China relationship is of strategic significance. Any attempt to disrupt or undermine Pakistan-China cooperation is bound to fail.

He said, the two sides will continuously strengthen practical cooperation across various fields, jointly upgrade the CPEC and accelerate the construction of major projects in railways, highways, and ports. The two sides are ready to build Karachi-Hyderabad section in line with the modality of "implementing in a phased manner." The two sides will work together to refine and optimise the construction plan of Karachi-Hyderabad section and formulate financing and implementation plans that are feasible and sustainable at the earliest.

The two sides will speed up the development of the auxiliary infrastructure of the Gwadar Port, steadily attract more cargo shipments to the port, find a solution to inadequate water and power supply at an early date, accelerate the development of the port's industrial zone, and solidly enhance connectivity between the port and other parts of Pakistan. The New Gwadar International Airport project aided by China has been completed.

Yundong said, China firmly supports Pakistan's efforts in combating terrorism and asks Pakistan to take targeted security measures to comprehensively safeguard the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan, so as to create a safe and secure environment for the cooperation between the two countries. About China's achievement and remarkable social and economic development, the consul general said, China maintained an average annual economic growth rate of 8.9% for 45 consecutive years, increasing its economic scale by 47 times.

## Rising Violence Threatens Chinese-Funded Projects In South And Central Asia

27 November 2024, [Radio Free Europe](#), Bashir Ahmad Gwakh and Frud Bezhan

Scores of multimillion-dollar Chinese-funded **development projects** dot South and Central Asia.

But rising violence is threatening to derail China's investments in the region, which is key to Beijing's global Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In Pakistan, militants have killed seven Chinese workers so far this year. In Tajikistan, a Chinese worker was **killed** this month in the first attack of its kind.

The killing of Chinese nationals has highlighted the growing fighting capabilities of extremist groups in the region, which has long been a hotbed of militancy.

### 'The Chinese Are So Frustrated'

Thousands of Chinese nationals work in Pakistan, which is home to the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), an integral part of the BRI. To protect Chinese workers, Islamabad has created a special police force, installed hundreds of checkpoints, and erected numerous barriers around the megaprojects. But the measures have failed to curb the rising number of attacks on Chinese workers in recent years.

Experts have put that down largely to Pakistani security and intelligence lapses as well as the increasing capabilities of the Baloch Liberation Army, the largest armed group in the southwestern province of Balochistan.

"China believes in safe investments, meaning they do not like conflicts around their projects," said Jalal Bazwan, a researcher at China's Zhejiang University.

"The Chinese are so frustrated because of the inability of the Pakistan government to provide security that they will not invest in further projects," he added.

Balochistan, an impoverished but energy-rich region, is the site of dozens of Chinese-funded infrastructure, energy, and trade projects. The vast province borders Afghanistan and Iran and is home to Pakistan's Baluch ethnic minority, who accuse Islamabad of exploiting the province's natural wealth.

In October, the BLA killed two Chinese citizens in a **bombing** outside the airport in Pakistan's largest city, Karachi. In March, a suicide bomber drove an explosives-laden car into a bus carrying Chinese workers in northwestern Pakistan, **killing** five of them. No group claimed responsibility.

The fighting capabilities of the BLA, a separatist militant group, have increased in recent years.

Estimated to have around 5,000 fighters, the BLA has been boosted by the influx of U.S. weapons to Pakistan since the Taliban takeover of neighboring Afghanistan in 2021.

The BLA has also evolved in recent years, adopting tactics used by militant Islamist groups like suicide bombings. The BLA has also boosted its ranks by recruiting women.

Besides attacking Chinese nationals, the BLA has also rapidly increased its attacks on Pakistani security forces.

"Generous donations, tax and extortion of local projects, and the purchase of modern weapons have helped the BLA carry out more attacks with precision," said Bahot Baloch, a researcher on armed groups in Balochistan.

Experts say China is concerned that rising violence in Balochistan could disrupt its projects in Pakistan.

In a sign of Beijing's worries, China **said** on November 19 that it will send troops to Pakistan later this month for their first joint counterterrorism military exercise in five years.

Pakistan on November 19 **announced** plans to launch a new military offensive against militants in Balochistan.

"No doubt that the attacks have increased," said Abdullah Khan, managing director of the Pakistan Institute of Conflict and Security Studies think tank. "However, this will not deter China or make it wind down its projects and leave Pakistan. The billion-dollar investment is too big to pause. China is here to stay."

### First Known Attack In Tajikistan

On November 18, one Chinese national was killed and four injured in a cross-border attack in Tajikistan's south, sources told RFE/RL's Tajik Service.

The sources said the attackers crossed from Afghanistan. But it was unclear if they were criminals possibly involved in drug trafficking, a crime that is common in the area, or members of a militant group. The Chinese nationals were reportedly working at a gold mine in the Zarbuzi Gorge.

Significantly, the attack marked the first known incident resulting in the death of a Chinese national in Tajikistan, home to major Chinese-funded energy and transport projects.

The deadly attack underscored the persistent security concerns along Tajikistan's southern frontier. Dozens of extremist groups are active inside Afghanistan, including the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and Jamaat Ansarullah, which is comprised mainly of Tajik citizens. Edward Lemon, a Central Asia expert at Texas A&M University, says China has long been concerned over the security of its operations in Tajikistan and it has invested significantly in bolstering the Tajik military and law enforcement.

"Rather than derailing China's investments in the country, I think this attack will only strengthen China's role in security in the country," he said. "We can expect further military aid, training, and potentially an



expanded role for Chinese private security companies operating in the country to protect Chinese investments."

### One killed, dozens injured in clashes with Imran Khan's supporters near Pakistan's capital

26 November 2024, [Reuters](#), Asif Shahzad

At least one police officer was killed and dozens of people injured in Pakistan as supporters of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan clashed with security forces outside the capital Islamabad on Monday, officials and Khan's party said.

Authorities have enforced a security lockdown for the last two days after Khan called for a march on parliament for a sit-in demonstration to demand his release, while highways into the city have been barricaded.

One police officer was shot and killed, at least 119 others were injured, and 22 police vehicles were torched in clashes just outside Islamabad and elsewhere in the Punjab province, provincial police chief Usman Anwar said. Two officers were in critical condition, he said.

Khan's party said scores of its workers were also hurt. It said the jailed leader's third wife, Bushra Bibi, and a key aide, Ali Amin Gandapur, who is the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, were leading a march that arrived almost inside Islamabad on Monday night.

The government has used shipping containers to block major roads and streets in Islamabad, with patrols of police and paramilitary personnel in riot gear.

Officials and witnesses said all public transport between cities and terminals had also been shut down in the eastern province to keep away the protesters, Provincial Information Minister Uzma Bukhari said about 80 of Khan's supporters had been arrested.

Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif told local Geo News TV that the government sought talks with leaders of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party to calm the situation. "It was a sincere attempt I must say but it didn't yield any results," he said.

#### BULLET FOR BULLET

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said security forces showed "extreme restraint" in confronting the protesters, some of whom he said had fired live rounds, while police only used rubber bullets and fired teargas canisters.

"It is easy to respond a bullet with a bullet," he said.

He said the government had offered Khan's party permission to hold a sit-in protest at an open field on Islamabad's outskirts, adding the party's leaders took this offer to Khan at his prison cell, but, "we haven't yet heard back on it."

Naqvi added the protesters would not be allowed to reach outside parliament, warning the government will be forced to use "extreme" steps if they did not budge, which could include imposing curfew or calling in army troops.

"We will not let them cross our red lines," he said

But Khan's party accused the government of using excessive violence to block the protesters and said hundreds of workers and leaders had been arrested.

"They are even firing live bullets," one of Khan's aides, Shaukat Yousafzai, told Geo News.

Reuters TV and local TV footage showed police firing teargas canisters at Khan's supporters, who were pelting them with stones and bricks.

The videos showed vehicles and trees ablaze along the main march just outside Islamabad as the protesters at some places pushed shipment containers to make their way.

The capital has bolstered security for Monday's arrival of the president of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko for a three day visit, a Pakistan prime minister office statement said.

Gatherings in Islamabad have been banned, while all schools in the capital and the adjacent city of Rawalpindi were to remain closed on Monday and Tuesday, the authorities said,

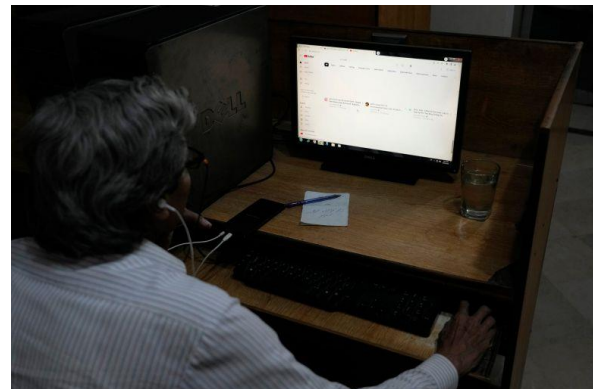
The protest march, which Khan has described as the "final call", is one of many his party had held to seek his release since he was jailed in August last year. The party's most recent protest in Islamabad, early in October, turned violent.

Voted out of power by parliament in 2022 after he fell out with Pakistan's powerful military, Khan faces charges ranging from corruption to instigation of violence, all of which he and his party deny.

### Pakistan tests secret China-like 'firewall' to tighten online surveillance

26 November 2024, [Aljazeera](#), Abid Hussain

*The new monitoring system could give the government unprecedented insights into citizens' online use. It could also slow down the internet.*



*The Pakistani government is deploying a national internet firewall,*

*which experts fear can be used to surveil regular internet users [KM Chaudary/AP Photos]*

Pakistan's government has deployed Chinese technology to build what some senior officials familiar with the project are calling a new, national internet "firewall" that will allow authorities to monitor online traffic and regulate the use of popular apps with greater control than before.

The project aims to upgrade the government's web monitoring capabilities at the country's main internet gateways, as well as at the data centres of mobile service and major internet service providers.

Senior executives from two internet service providers (ISPs) and an official from the country's security establishment told Al Jazeera that trials of this new firewall, installed as part of Pakistan's internet infrastructure, were responsible for a spate of complaints of poor internet connectivity in the country in recent months.

Officially, though, government officials, while acknowledging that they are tightening the country's online monitoring structure, have denied that this is to blame for slowdowns in internet speed.

The trial of the new firewall comes at a time of heightened political tensions in Pakistan. The country's authorities have suspended mobile internet and blocked several VPNs amid a massive protest launched by supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is under arrest since August 2023 over a spate of charges. The protesters, who have arrived in Islamabad despite court orders against their agitation, are demanding Khan's release. At least six security personnel have died in clashes with the protesters so far.

The new monitoring system — the trials started well before the latest protest march — cost between 20 to 30 billion rupees (\$72m to \$107m), according to officials aware of the project.

Since mid-July, internet users in Pakistan have reported frequent slowdowns, degraded service quality and occasional disruptions to multimedia features on WhatsApp, the widely used messaging app.

"The issues internet users faced in July were due to the firewall testing, which also affected WhatsApp's multimedia functions, such as sending photos, videos, voice notes and making audio/video calls," said a senior official from one of the country's leading ISPs.

A firewall is a combination of hardware and software used by governments or organisations to control and monitor internet traffic, acting as a digital gatekeeper that decides what data to allow or block.

According to the ISP official, Pakistan's previous technology lacked the ability to manage applications or websites at a "granular level" — a capability that the recently acquired Chinese technology provides.

"The new firewall also allows specific features within an app or website to be blocked or throttled," he explained, citing the example of WhatsApp in several Middle Eastern nations, where users cannot make audio or video calls on the platform but can use other multimedia features.

A Ministry of Defence official, familiar with the new deployments, also confirmed that Pakistan had acquired a new "firewall system" from China, which was first tested in mid-July.

"Typically, such systems are tested in a sandbox environment to avoid widespread service disruptions," the official told Al Jazeera, requesting anonymity as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

However, Pakistan's internet infrastructure — such as fibre optics, network-related equipment, switches and routers — has been built using technology from a range of countries including France, Finland, the United States and China.

"Due to the diverse equipment in Pakistan's internet infrastructure, testing on a live system was necessary, leading to some initial connectivity and service issues," the official explained.

The official added that the new system has the ability to block VPNs and significantly enhance real-time monitoring through a range of content filtering methods.

A VPN is a tool that creates a secure connection between a device and a network by encrypting internet traffic and masking the user's online identity. Pakistani authorities have long struggled with attempts to block specific articles, videos or other content online without needing to pull the plug on an entire website.

In a particularly notorious incident in 2008, Pakistan wanted to block a YouTube link that the government argued contained a blasphemous documentary. Instead, Pakistan ended up crashing YouTube globally. The new system, the Defence Ministry official said, would be the first to help Pakistan get around that frustrating challenge. "Instead of blocking an entire platform like YouTube or a website, we can now restrict access to a single video or article," the official said.

#### **Shifting explanations for internet slowdown**

In July and August, when instances of internet slowdown were at their peak, the government offered a range of explanations: Excessive VPN use, faulty submarine cables, global internet collapse after an outage at the US cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike, a cyberattack and routine failures.

On August 15, following a parliamentary committee meeting, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Pakistan's minister for information technology, said she was "not aware" of any firewall testing but added that Pakistan was upgrading its existing "Web Management System" (WMS) due to cybersecurity threats.

“Every government in the world takes measures to implement cybersecurity measures. We previously had a WMS, and now there is an upgrade of the same,” Khawaja told reporters.

Three days later, during a news conference, Khawaja robustly denied any allegations of government tampering with the internet, saying there was no order to “throttle” the web. She blamed excessive VPN use. “A large number of people in the country now use VPN, which leads to pressure on the internet resulting in a slowdown,” she told the media.

On August 21, Hafeez-ur-Rehman, a retired major general and the head of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), the country’s telecom regulatory body, told a group of parliamentarians that faults in one of the seven submarine cables connecting Pakistan to the global internet were responsible for the slow speeds.

Rehman firmly denied that the installation of a new monitoring system was behind the disruptions.

“Every country has some mechanism to monitor internet content or services. Whether you call it a firewall, a web monitoring system, or content filtering, it exists everywhere. We are also upgrading our system, but it is not the reason for the slow internet,” Rehman told parliamentarians during the meeting.

In a written response to Al Jazeera, the regulator reiterated that a WMS had been operational in the country for several years to “monitor and mitigate” illegal telecom activities, commonly known as grey traffic, but was not responsible for the degraded internet quality. “WMS is continuously upgraded to cater for the increasing usage of the internet. It has never caused a slowness in internet services,” the PTA said.

Khawaja also submitted a response to the National Assembly on August 26 [PDF], in which she confirmed that the PTA was using a WMS for “internet content management”, through which applications or websites were blocked in Pakistan.

Despite several attempts to contact Khawaja, the minister did not respond to Al Jazeera’s questions regarding the capabilities, objectives, origins, procurement details, or costs of the new firewall – or any details about the WMS.

However, in a written response submitted to Pakistan’s Senate, Khawaja said that the PTA, as the regulatory body, was not involved with the firewall project.

The “PTA is not involved in the funding, procurement, deployment, or operations of any firewall project at the national level,” Khawaja said [PDF] on September 12, responding to questions from senators.

Confusingly, Khawaja has over the months used the terms “management” and “monitoring” alternatively on various occasions, while referring to the monitoring system which, according to the military official and the

ISP executives Al Jazeera spoke with, has surveillance capabilities.

### **A ‘national firewall’ for ‘national security’**

Pakistan, a country of 241 million people, has nearly 140 million broadband users and 190 million mobile subscribers. However, it relies on just two major internet gateway points, both located in Karachi, the country’s largest city and economic hub.

These gateways, operated by the state-owned Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and private-sector firm Transworld Associates (TWA), are connected by seven submarine cables that provide internet connectivity.

According to a statement from the PTA in January, upgrades to Pakistan’s web monitoring system at these gateways began in December 2023.

This announcement came after then-Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar revealed the imminent introduction of what he described as a “national firewall” to regulate the country’s social media.

“We are working on technology-based solutions to address our challenges and threats,” Kakar said in a late January interview, just before the February 8 general elections.

On the morning of February 8, the Ministry of Interior announced the closure of mobile internet services across the country to “maintain the law and order situation and to deal with potential threats”.

But the first signs of a broader internet crackdown appeared on February 17, when users found themselves unable to access the social media platform X.

Simon Migliano, head of research at Top10VPN.com, an independent VPN review website, noted that after the X ban, VPN use in Pakistan more than doubled compared with the previous four weeks.

The newly elected government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, initially remained silent on the issue but later disclosed that X had been blocked under orders from the Interior Ministry for non-compliance with government directives to take down content.

“The decision to ban X was made to uphold national security, maintain public order, and preserve the nation’s integrity,” the ministry stated in its report to the Islamabad High Court in April.

While statements from various government officials continued to hint at the introduction of a new “firewall”, it wasn’t until mid-July that widespread internet service disruptions began. Users across the country reported sluggish speeds, degraded service quality and frequent connectivity issues.

Most notably, WhatsApp’s multimedia services were disrupted, though text messaging on the platform continued without issues.

Arturo Filasto, co-founder of the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), confirmed that

WhatsApp multimedia features had been “throttled” on July 17.

OONI data from August revealed similar interference, showing that internet traffic was “monitored” and that user attempts to connect with Signal, another encrypted communications app, were also impeded.

Jazz, the country’s largest mobile service provider, acknowledged receiving complaints about degraded internet services.

“We have received reports of disruptions affecting some users on certain social media platforms. Our team is actively investigating the issue and remains committed to ensuring uninterrupted service,” a Jazz spokesperson said in a statement emailed to Al Jazeera in early September.

Al Jazeera also reached out to more than two dozen officials across several ISPs, telecommunications companies and government departments. Only a few responded, and those who did spoke on condition of anonymity, while most declined to comment.

**Like a security checkpoint, slowdowns are inevitable**

For nearly two decades, Pakistan has deployed monitoring hardware and software solutions, primarily to combat grey traffic and counter “offensive material” online.

The country has a longstanding ban on pornographic and blasphemous content. It also regularly issues content takedown requests to social media platforms under national laws.

In the 2010s, the government began seeking more sophisticated surveillance technologies, capable of intercepting mobile phone calls and monitoring internet activity.

In December 2018, Pakistan signed a five-year contract worth \$18m with Canadian firm Sandvine for a WMS.

The Sandvine WMS, like other similar surveillance systems, could perform various content filtering measures such as Uniform Resource Locator (URL) filtering, Internet Protocol (IP) filtering, Domain Name System (DNS) filtering and keyword filtering – all designed to manage the internet traffic passing through the WMS, which was installed on the country’s internet gateway points.

However, the most powerful tool in its repertoire was Deep Packet Inspection (DPI) – a method that intercepts and analyses data transmitted over a network and is capable of decrypting and monitoring traffic between users and servers.

DPI works like an airport scanner, allowing authorities to look inside the data packets travelling across the internet and check their contents for sensitive information.

Monitoring systems like Sandvine “heavily rely on DPI”, explained Haroon Ali, a cybersecurity expert and director at the Australian Cyber Corporation, a Sydney-

based private organisation specialising in cybersecurity for businesses and government clients.

“DPI examines data packets at a granular level, identifying the type of traffic and allowing for blocking or deeper inspection based on the rules set within the WMS,” Ali told Al Jazeera.

According to two employees at a major ISP, the Sandvine contract ended in November 2023: The system had struggled to handle Pakistan’s growing internet traffic and increasing monitoring demands.

“The system became overloaded due to the constant addition of new rules. Each rule consumes bandwidth and capacity,” one ISP employee told Al Jazeera.

Meanwhile, the Defence Ministry official said that the new firewall system being implemented will offer more advanced surveillance capabilities.

“The goal is to monitor everything without shutting down or restricting the entire system. A powerful DPI-enabled system can gather metadata from users, even if their primary data traffic remains encrypted,” the official said.

Metadata, or “data about data”, includes crucial information such as a user’s network, device, timestamps and location, and plays a key role in identifying individuals.

WhatsApp, for example, collects various types of metadata, including timestamps, IP addresses, device information, timing of use, and sender and recipient details.

While metadata does not contain actual message content, and no WMS system can read the messages themselves, Ali, the cybersecurity expert, explained that metadata still holds enough information to compromise user anonymity.

“A WMS can be a powerful surveillance tool, using DPI to analyse metadata and potentially breach user privacy,” he said.

But the manner in which Pakistan plans to deploy the new system could inevitably slow internet speeds, warn some experts – not as a bug but as a feature.

Major websites and services like Google, Netflix and Meta store copies of frequently requested online content locally, reducing the need to fetch data from distant servers. That, however, means that a WMS that monitors only internet gateways to the country does not capture use details of locally stored data.

To get around that, a senior ISP executive said the new web monitoring system was being deployed not only at the country’s internet gateway but also at local data centres of mobile service providers and ISPs.

“Unlike the Sandvine system, the new DPI-based system is now capable of monitoring local internet traffic,” the executive added.

But to monitor local traffic, the new firewall will use what is known as an “in-line network”, which acts like a security checkpoint, where each data packet must be inspected and either allowed to pass or be blocked –

as opposed to an alternative mechanism that simply observed and records traffic without interfering with its flow.

The use of an in-line network “will inevitably slow down internet speeds”, the ISP official said.

It could lead to “slower internet and delays, affecting real-time applications like video conferencing and degrading the overall user experience”, said Usman Ilyas, an assistant professor at the University of Birmingham.

So, why would any government employ an in-line network? The answer is simple, said Ilyas: This mechanism is necessary for surveillance and censorship.

#### **Could VPNs be responsible for slow speeds?**

Both the PTA and the IT Ministry have repeatedly denied that internet slowdown concerns are linked to the new firewall deployment or testing.

On September 6, the IT Ministry submitted a written response to the National Assembly, detailing three major submarine cable faults in 2024 that affected internet services in the country. The ministry said that all but one fault, which occurred in June, had been resolved.

Research by Bytes for All, an Islamabad-based organisation focused on information and communication technologies, recorded at least 15 major internet and mobile service disruptions in Pakistan this year.

Aftab Siddiqui, a senior manager at the Internet Society, an international advocacy group, also confirmed the cable fault disrupting Pakistan’s internet services in June, but added that this alone did not fully explain the widespread service degradation.

Often, he said, the government does not even explain reasons for slowdowns and disruptions, “showing a notable lack of transparency”.

Bytes for All also challenged Khwaja’s, the IT minister, claims blaming excessive VPN use for internet slowdowns, in a detailed technical report.

Published on August 27, the report contradicted Khawaja’s assertion, showing that using a VPN often improved internet quality.

The report further observed that this improvement in service quality suggested that a VPN allowed users to bypass “throttling or DPI measures”.

According to data by Top10VPN, Pakistan’s VPN use in July and August 2024 was 63 percent higher than in the same period in 2023. Migliano of Top10VPN said that the claim that excessive VPN use was causing internet slowdown was “absolutely absurd”.

#### **Advertisement**

“Whether it is a case of ignorance or wilful misinformation is not for me to say,” he told Al Jazeera. While VPNs consume a marginally greater bandwidth than regular connections, “it is simply not possible for

a VPN to impact the wider network beyond the device where it is installed”.

Meanwhile, Arturo Filasto, co-founder of OONI, said that the internet degradation data collected by his organisation was “very inconsistent” with the government narrative that a submarine cable cut could alone have caused the internet disruption suffered by the country.

“If that were the case, you would not see failures affecting only specific services but rather, many services indiscriminately,” Filasto explained. “What we see in the data is consistent with the hypothesis of this being the result of the rollout of newly acquired technology.”

#### **Expanding internet control**

Over the years, the Pakistani government has expanded its control over the internet, using both technological means and legislation to regulate what users can access and consume.

But the latest attempt at a firewall comes at a time when the government has been accused by critics of particularly targeting former Prime Minister Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) – the country’s most popular political party.

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Ironically, Khan’s PTI government itself had authorised the purchase of the Sandvine WMS and was accused of censorship during its time in government, between August 2018 and April 2022.

According to Freedom House, a political advocacy group based in Washington, DC, during that time, Pakistan’s net freedom score hovered between 27 and 25 out of 100.

Its latest 2024 Freedom on the Net report shows no improvement, with Pakistan scoring 27 out of 100, maintaining its “not free” status.

However, since Khan was removed from power two years ago through a parliamentary vote of no confidence, the party has faced a crackdown. Khan has spent 15 months behind bars facing numerous charges, and his party has faced mass arrests of leaders and workers, as well as online restrictions.

In December last year, PTI held a “virtual rally” as part of its election campaign, drawing more than 5 million views across social media platforms, with imprisoned Khan delivering a four-minute speech which was generated with the help of artificial intelligence.

Internet users reported service outages during livestreaming of the speech, a disruption confirmed by NetBlocks, an internet tracking company. The party’s website remains inaccessible in Pakistan at the time of writing.

On November 24, PTI supporters launched a protest march towards Islamabad to seek Khan’s release from jail, during which the government once again restricted access to VPNs while shutting down mobile internet services across the country.



WhatsApp multimedia services were also disrupted, leaving disgruntled users unable to download photos and videos, or exchange voice notes without VPNs. The restriction on services was also confirmed by Netblocks in a message on X.

Digital rights activist Farieha Aziz linked the “tremendous secrecy” and “palpable sense of urgency” surrounding the deployment of Pakistan’s new firewall system to the country’s political climate. “This rush seems tied to the current political environment, aimed at controlling the flow of information and narrative building,” Aziz told Al Jazeera.

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The urgency behind these secretive firewall trials also comes at a time when Pakistan’s powerful military has described threats from what it calls “digital terrorism”. The military, which has governed the country directly for more than three decades and continues to wield significant political and social influence, introduced the term earlier this year.

Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the military’s media wing, claimed that “politically motivated and vested digital terrorism” was being used to spread dependency within the country.

“It is to sow discord among national institutions, especially the armed forces, and the people of Pakistan by peddling blatant lies, fake news, and propaganda,” the military said in a press release in May this year.

The military’s statement was widely interpreted as an allusion to PTI, a party which is considered technologically the savviest in the country and whose supporters often dominate social media narratives.

Party supporters have been targeted for running “anti-state digital campaigns” while raids on PTI offices, including its headquarters in Islamabad, have resulted in arrests on charges of “digital terrorism” and “false propaganda” via social media.

However, Aziz argued that the concept of “digital terrorism” had no legal standing.

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“This term was coined in a political context and holds no legal validity. The narrative being built around it suggests that it’s more about controlling political discourse than addressing any genuine cybersecurity threats,” she said.

#### Turning to China

None of this is entirely new, say analysts. During the PTI’s tenure in government – the party was widely seen as close to the military at the time – numerous critics were arrested for their views on social media.

Websites and pages were blocked, and social media platforms were pressured to remove content deemed to violate the “integrity, security and defence of Pakistan”, among other reasons.

Under Khan, both the PTI government and the military began using the phrase “fifth-generation warfare”, suggesting that “anti-state propaganda” was being spread against Pakistan on social media, necessitating a robust digital defence. It was a precursor to the concept of “digital terrorism”.

But some things have changed.

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Previously, Pakistan relied heavily on Western technology for regulating its internet, using hardware and software solutions from companies like Sandvine, FinFisher, and Netsweeper. However, facing pressure from digital rights groups, many of these companies stopped providing services to Pakistan, leaving fewer options available.

As Pakistan’s ties with China, its neighbour and closest ally, further strengthened, particularly following the launch of the \$62bn China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) infrastructure project, China has also emerged as its new technological partner.

During the last few years, the idea of replicating China’s Great Firewall – its sophisticated internet censorship and surveillance system – also began to take hold within Pakistan’s security establishment.

Any firewall is only as good as its ability to stop leakages. Like China, where only government-approved VPNs can legally be used to get around online barriers, Pakistan, too, is moving towards banning the use of “illegal” VPNs.

In its written response to Al Jazeera in September, the PTA said it was “in touch with stakeholders to adopt a viable solution to facilitate legitimate VPN usage while fulfilling its obligations under our laws”.

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However, in early November, several VPN services became inaccessible in Pakistan for a few hours before being restored. PTA, the regulator, did not directly address the sudden outage, or the resumption.

Then, on November 15, the Interior Ministry asked the PTA in a letter to “block illegal VPNs” across the country, saying they were being used to “facilitate violent activities” as well as to access “pornographic and blasphemous content”, both of which are banned in the country.

“Of late, an alarming fact has been identified, wherein VPNs are used by terrorists to obscure and conceal their communications,” the letter by the ministry, seen by Al Jazeera, said.

#### Economic risks

While the vendors behind Pakistan’s new firewall remain unconfirmed, analysts agree that the country’s internet infrastructure is centralised and fairly restrictive.

According to Ilyas, the academic, Pakistan’s censorship capabilities were modest before the latest disruptions began.

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"But the new system, rumoured to be deployed this year, is a lot less transparent and far more disruptive to productivity and user experience," he said.

Ali, the Sydney-based cybersecurity expert, explained that while many countries deploy web monitoring systems, they do so with legal oversight.

"Countries like the US or UK use similar systems, but they often have legal guardrails – such as court orders and procedural checks – to protect privacy and freedom of speech," he said.

Experts say there is little guarantee that Pakistan will ensure similar safeguards while using its new firewall. For a country striving to improve its struggling economy with export revenue from its growing IT industry, the implications of a more intrusive firewall are economically significant, too.

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Any system that disrupts internet services, hampers business operations or raises privacy concerns could pose a serious threat to both private individuals and the broader business community, digital rights activist Aziz said.

"Pakistani businesses rely on global platforms for services like web hosting, and many have contracts requiring confidentiality. If the new system inspects network traffic, blocks VPNs, or imposes a registration regime, it could create more obstacles," she warned.

Pakistan then risks being perceived as an unstable and unattractive market for investment, she said – precisely at a time when Prime Minister Sharif and his team have been desperately wooing countries like Saudi Arabia, China and the United Arab Emirates for big-ticket projects.

"Lack of transparency, invasive technology and regressive policies are creating an environment where there is no guarantee of service, the rule of law is weak, and even court actions don't necessarily lead to relief," Aziz said.

"This doesn't bode well."

### **Pakistan's military to launch new offensive against separatist militants**

20 November 2024, [Reuters](#), Asif Shahzad

Pakistan plans a new military offensive against separatist insurgents in southwestern Balochistan province, home to key Chinese Belt and Road projects, but it was not immediately clear if the plan would be a joint effort with its giant neighbour.

Following a string of deadly attacks that targeted its citizens in recent months, China has pushed to join security efforts to protect them, and on Tuesday unveiled a plan for joint counter-terrorism exercises in Pakistan.

The exercise, which both sides called Warrior-VIII between the Pakistan Army and Peoples' Liberation

Army of China, was launched at a northwestern Pakistani counter-terrorism facility, a Pakistani army statement said.

"The exercise is aimed at refining professional skills through joint training, besides harnessing (our) historic military-to-military relations," said the statement, largely echoing a Chinese defence ministry announcement the day before.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chaired a meeting of civil and military leaders who gave the go-ahead for the "comprehensive operation", his office said in a statement.

But it stopped short of saying whether the effort was limited to ground operations, or could involve the air force, and whether it was prompted by China's disquiet at the separatist attacks.

Pakistan's information ministry and the military did not immediately respond to requests for details on the nature of the offensive.

Asked whether China was involved in Pakistan's planned offensive against Balochistan insurgents, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said on Wednesday, "I do not understand the situation you mentioned."

He added: "As a matter of principle, China firmly supports the anti-terrorism efforts of the Pakistani side and is willing to deepen pragmatic cooperation with (it) in various fields to better benefit the two countries and (their) peoples..."

Pakistan's military already has a huge presence in the rugged region bordering Afghanistan and Iran, where insurgent groups have been fighting for a separate homeland for decades to win a larger share of benefits from the resource-rich province.

The military has long run intelligence-based operations against the insurgent groups, the most prominent being the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), which escalated attacks in recent months on the military and nationals from longtime ally China.

The region is home to Gwadar Port, built by China as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a \$65 billion investment in President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road infrastructure initiative to expand China's global reach.

In addition to the recent attacks, the BLA claimed a suicide bombing last month outside the international airport in the southern port city of Karachi that killed two Chinese engineers.

### **China's PLA Sends Troops To Joint Anti-Terrorism Exercise In Pakistan**

20 November 2024, [Memri TV](#)

*The Western Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has sent troops to Pakistan to participate in a joint anti-terrorism exercise*

from late November to mid-December, amid reports that Beijing is increasingly concerned about recurring attacks by Baloch militants targeting its nationals working on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, which exploit resources in Pakistan-controlled Balochistan. This clip is a video report about the exercise, published on November 20, 2024 on YouTube by China's CCTV Video News Agency.

**Onscreen text:** "The Western Theater Command of the Chinese People's Liberation Army have sent troops to Pakistan to participate in a joint anti-terrorism exercise from late November to mid-December. Coded 'Warrior-VIII', the exercise will focus on joint counter-terrorism clean-up and strike operations.

"This year's exercise is the eighth joint exercise of the series between the Chinese and Pakistani militaries with the aim to consolidate and deepen practical exchanges and cooperation, as well as enhance the capability for conducting joint counter-terrorism operations."

**Zhu Zhenlong, military official:** "By taking advantage of the opportunity of joint air delivery, we carried out specialized intensive training of the troops, focusing on improving their joint delivery capabilities including refined measurement, containerized loading and formation under combat conditions."

**Onscreen text:** "More than 300 Chinese troops are taking part in the exercise."

**Deng Yajun, military official:** "This joint exercise exemplifies the strong trust and deep friendship between the two countries and their militaries. We will focus on the theme of joint anti-terrorism and continue to deepen exchanges with the Pakistani side in this field. We will work with the Pakistani military to analyze new trends and characteristics of terrorism and develop effective countermeasures."

### China, Pakistan to hold first anti-terror drills in 5 years amid rising attacks

19 November 2024, [VOA](#), Ayaz Gul

China said Tuesday it will send troops to Pakistan later this month for the countries first joint counterterrorism military exercise in five years to enhance security cooperation with its South Asian neighbor and close ally.

The announcement follows reports that Beijing is pushing Islamabad to permit its security personnel to safeguard thousands of Chinese nationals working in Pakistan from deadly terrorist attacks. It also comes amid a spike in terrorist attacks against Pakistani security forces attributed to or claimed by the outlawed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, commonly known as TTP.

On Tuesday, China's Defense Ministry said that the Pakistan-hosted "Warrior-VIII exercise is set to begin in

late November and will run until mid-December "with the aim ... to enhance the capability for conducting joint counterterrorism operations," according to Chinese state media.

The ministry said the exercise will involve troops from the Western Theater Command of China's People's Liberation Army.

"The two sides will engage in multi-level and mixed training across various specialties and organize live troop drills in accordance with the actual combat process," according to the state media report.

China and Pakistan last conducted joint counterterrorism military drills in 2019.

#### String of attacks

Last month, a suicide car bombing just outside the airport in the southern Pakistani port city of Karachi killed two Chinese engineers. The victims were returning to work after a holiday in Thailand on a project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a multibillion-dollar extension of President Xi Jinping's global Belt and Road Initiative.

In March, a suicide car bomb attack in northern Pakistan killed five Chinese workers and their local driver.

The repeated targeting of its nationals reportedly angered China, prompting it to urge Pakistan to negotiate a joint security management system to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens in the country.

The Pakistani government has dismissed the alleged Chinese diplomatic pressure, however, as "media speculation" and an attempt "to create confusion" regarding Islamabad's relationship with Beijing.

"Pakistan and China have a robust dialogue and cooperation on a range of issues, including counterterrorism and security of Chinese nationals in Pakistan," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mumtaz Baloch told reporters last Thursday at her weekly news conference.

"We will continue to work with our Chinese brothers for the safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects, and institutions in Pakistan," she stated.

#### Shaking ties

Baloch added that attempts to undermine the mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries will not succeed, nor will the two countries "allow any efforts or stories to derail the Pakistan-China strategic partnership."

Speaking at a seminar in Islamabad just days after the Karachi car bomb attack, Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong publicly questioned the host government's safety measures to deter threats to Chinese nationals. "It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months," Jiang stated. He urged Islamabad to take "effective remedial measures to prevent the recurrence of such terror acts and ensure that perpetrators are identified, caught, and punished."

Pakistan dismissed the Chinese envoy's remarks as "perplexing" and contrary to established diplomatic traditions between the neighbors.

The Pakistani response was unprecedented, and Jiang's public admonishment of Islamabad highlighted the strains arising from attacks on Chinese nationals that have resulted in the loss of at least 21 lives over the past five years.

#### **'Afghan terror sanctuaries'**

The joint drills between Pakistani and Chinese troops come amid a dramatic surge in deadly militant attacks on security forces and civilians in Pakistan, which authorities say are being orchestrated from "TTP sanctuaries" in neighboring Afghanistan. The country's Islamist Taliban leaders reject the allegations.

Yue Xiaoyong, China's special envoy for Afghan affairs, visited Islamabad this week, where Pakistani officials reportedly shared with him evidence regarding TTP's presence in Afghanistan and the threat it poses to regional stability.

Neither Islamabad nor Beijing has commented on the media reports. A brief post-meeting Pakistani statement said the discussion centered on the Afghan situation, with both sides reaffirming "the vital role of neighboring countries for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan."

#### **Protection of Chinese nationals a recurring headache for Pakistan**

17 November 2024, [Deccan Herald](#), Rana Banerji

China has grown increasingly frustrated by the spate of attacks on its nationals working on various infrastructure and power generation projects in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative.

Pakistan has traditionally described its relationship with China in almost reverential terms, often calling it "deeper than the seas and higher than the mountains." However, this sentiment was recently challenged when Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong labelled two attacks on Chinese nationals working in Pakistan, in March and October 2024, as "unacceptable," delivering a clear message to both Pakistan's civilian and military leadership.

Zaidong was speaking at the "China at 75: A Journey of Progress, Transformation & Global Leadership" seminar hosted by the Pakistan-China Institute on October 30. The think tank is headed by ex-Senator Mushahid Hussain, an erstwhile establishment favourite and prominent India baiter who has recently aligned his fortunes with ousted former Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Chinese diplomat's remarks were caustic enough to invite a sharp response from Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, the spokesperson for Pakistan's Foreign Office, a day later on October 31. She termed

Zaidong's statement "surprising and not reflective of diplomatic traditions."

The bombing on October 6, 2024, involved a pick-up truck rigged with nearly 100 kg of explosives. The vehicle waited unchecked for about 40 minutes near the outermost security cordon of the heavily guarded Karachi airport before the driver rammed it into a car carrying two Chinese engineers returning to work on a project after a holiday in Thailand. Both engineers were killed, and several others injured. The separatist militant group Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) later claimed responsibility for the attack. China has grown increasingly frustrated by the spate of attacks on its nationals working on various infrastructure and power generation projects in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative. Officially launched by President Xi Jinping during his visit to Pakistan in April 2015 as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the CPEC has brought an estimated 12,000 Chinese experts, engineers, and technicians to Pakistan. Their work spans projects like the development of Gwadar Port as a dual-use economic and naval hub, the construction of the Gomal Zam Dam in South Waziristan, the Neelum and Kohala hydroelectric projects in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), and the Diamer Bhasha Dam in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB).

Chinese technical experts have also been instrumental in keeping the strategically vital Karakoram Highway open by clearing landslides and building tunnels near Hunza Lake. However, Baloch separatists and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants have intermittently attacked Chinese workers, even kidnapping some. This has necessitated the deployment of two separate divisions of the Pakistan Army to provide security. Previously known as the 'Karakoram Security Force,' one of these units has been rebranded as the 34 Infantry Division and is now tasked with securing the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa segments of the CPEC. Headquartered in Chilas (Gilgit-Baltistan), it operates under the supervision of X Corps in Rawalpindi. A second unit, the 44 Infantry Division, is stationed in Gwadar under XII Corps in Quetta, focusing on securing the Baluchistan and Sindh segments of CPEC. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif has reportedly assured Chinese officials of better security measures during recent discussions at the Climate Summit in Baku (12-13 November). However, Islamabad's failure to deter these attacks appears to have angered Beijing, which is reportedly pressuring Pakistan to formalise a joint security management system. This arrangement could involve the long-term deployment of Chinese military personnel in Pakistan. When questioned by Reuters, Lin Jian, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, denied familiarity with such discussions, stating only that China would continue strengthening cooperation with Pakistan to

maintain the security of its personnel, projects, and institutions. However, Pakistani security sources with direct knowledge of the negotiations have reportedly acknowledged receiving a written proposal from Beijing, which includes a clause permitting the deployment of military forces in each other's territory for counter-terrorism missions and joint strikes. Last week, Pakistan's Interior Ministry announced that both sides had agreed to develop a joint strategy to prevent similar incidents. However, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the information wing of the Pakistan Army, has refrained from commenting on the specifics of potential joint operations. A security official suggested that Pakistan prefers Chinese assistance in improving intelligence and surveillance capabilities rather than direct military involvement, indicating possible reluctance to allow a permanent Chinese military presence.

Responding to media queries during her weekly press briefing in Islamabad on 14 November, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch urged journalists "not to respond" to "media speculations based on unreliable sources" that she claimed were "motivated by an agenda to create confusion about the nature of this relationship." She echoed Lin Jian's assertion that both countries possessed "the resolve and capability to foil any attempt to harm China-Pakistan relations." Chinese military personnel have previously deployed temporarily in PoK and GB. However, a prolonged Chinese military presence in these regions could have adverse diplomatic and military repercussions for India, though it is unlikely to disrupt the ongoing détente along India's northern and northeastern borders.

### **Pakistan attracts Chinese investors with exclusive incentives in solar and EV sectors**

17 November 2024, [The Nation](#)

Pakistan is set to attract Chinese investors with exclusive incentives in the booming solar and electric vehicle (EV) sectors, said Pakistan's Trade and Investment Counselor to China Ghulam Qadir.

Addressing the 4th Beijing International Engineering Procurement Conference & Exposition for Engineering Construction Supply Chain (EPC Expo), focused on sustainable trade between China and Pakistan, Ghulam Qadir emphasized that the Pakistani government has introduced special incentives designed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in green technology.

"These sectors are pivotal for Pakistan's sustainable future and present lucrative opportunities for Chinese businesses," Qadir noted according to a report carried by China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday.

He highlighted the potential for collaboration on high-impact projects, including streamlined licensing

processes, tax breaks, and favorable import policies aimed at reducing setup costs and accelerating the transfer of EV and solar technology to Pakistan.

"Pakistan offers a consistent 10-year policy framework of tax exemption for import of plant, machinery, and equipment for new and BMRE for manufacturing of solar panels, parts & allied equipment's with equal treatment in sales tax for local manufacturers and importers and ten-year tax holidays. Bank financing loans at low interest rates for setting up local manufacturing and international-standard in-country testing facilities/labs", he added. "Pakistan sees China as a vital partner in transforming its energy and transportation landscape," Qadir stated.

"Our combined efforts in solar power and electric vehicle development can not only meet shared climate goals but also fuel substantial economic growth in both countries."

He said that Pakistan aims for 30% of its local vehicle production to be electric by 2030 whereas comprehensive EV Policy 2020-2025 wherein incentives for local electric vehicle manufacturing are granted to the manufacturers and reduce reliance on imported fuel.

He highlighted potential projects and collaborations, including co-manufacturing initiatives, technology transfer agreements, and joint ventures designed to streamline production and reduce costs.

Qadir mentioned that as countries globally look toward greener solutions, Pakistan aims to leverage Chinese expertise and investment in EV and solar technologies to accelerate its energy transition.

It is to be noted that the 4th Beijing International Engineering Procurement Conference & Exposition for Engineering Construction Supply Chain was scheduled to be held at Beijing Beiren International Exhibition & Convention Center from November 14-16, 2024.

### **'Don't trust Pak soldiers': Xi faces flak for Chinese deaths in Pakistan**

14 November 2024, [Business Standard](#), Bhaswar Kumar

*Many Chinese companies in Pakistan have reportedly turned to Chinese security engineers to gather intelligence amid inadequate local security arrangements*

Chinese President Xi Jinping is under mounting pressure to better secure his country's interests in volatile regions like Pakistan following a bomb attack by Pakistani separatists last month that killed two Chinese engineers, the *Financial Times* has reported.

Reflecting the challenges faced by Chinese workers in Pakistan, one businessman in the country's Punjab province told the *Financial Times*, "We don't trust that more Pakistani soldiers will keep us safe...". Instead, he said, "... We would prefer it was Chinese."



Stating that there's "not as much opportunity" in Pakistan and "the security is bad", the Chinese businessman reportedly added, "Many Chinese want to leave."

Many Chinese companies, facing security gaps in Pakistan, have reportedly turned to Chinese security engineers to develop plans, handle incidents, conduct background checks for local personnel, gather intelligence, and manage armed local guards, underscoring the inadequacy of local security arrangements.

These concerns have come to the fore amid the rising threat to Chinese investments in Pakistan, particularly the \$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is a critical part of Xi's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Recent attacks by the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) have highlighted the risks, reportedly sparking debate over Beijing's inability to address these persistent security issues.

#### **Challenges with Local Security Measures**

Despite significant allocations by Pakistan to safeguard Chinese investments, including over 15,000 personnel deployed across two special security divisions and additional provincial police units, the measures have failed to meet China's expectations, said the report.

Noting that part of this protection is actually funded by China's defence ministry, the report said that incidents like the recent shooting of two Chinese workers in Karachi by a Pakistani security guard have underscored the limitations of local forces in ensuring safety.

Beijing's dissatisfaction with these arrangements has prompted internal directives for Chinese personnel to oversee security matters. Speaking to the *Financial Times*, Zhou Chao, a former security manager for the Lahore Metro Orange Line project, explained that Chinese companies often station Chinese officers at project sites while hiring hundreds of local guards to compensate for Pakistan's ban on armed foreign contractors.

According to Zhou, China's central government has issued an internal directive to "let Chinese take care of the security of Chinese". But, these efforts have been hindered by strict regulations that limit the capacity of Chinese private security firms to operate effectively abroad.

#### **Chinese Security Companies Face Constraints**

Chinese private security firms have been following their country's state-owned enterprises abroad to safeguard infrastructure and resource projects. While some expected these firms to evolve into global players akin to Blackwater or Wagner Group, the report said that they remain constrained by Beijing's tight grip on military and policing functions.

Pakistan, for its part, also does not allow foreign armed security contractors in the country, further compounding these challenges. As a solution, Zhou told the *Financial Times*, Chinese companies station Chinese security officers at the project company, "two at a time, and hire 400 to 500 local guards".

According to the report, many executives also rely on what it described as "Chinese security engineers" to design security frameworks, handle incidents, and ensure intelligence-gathering to address risks on the ground.

#### **Diplomatic Push Amid Rising Casualties**

A suicide attack near Karachi's airport in October left two Chinese citizens dead and 10 others injured. The BLA has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The October bombing is the latest in a string of attacks that have pushed Chinese officials to adopt a firmer stance on security. During Chinese Premier Li Qiang's visit to Pakistan on October 15, in a joint statement, China "stressed the urgent need to adopt targeted security measures in Pakistan to jointly create a safe environment for co-operation between the two countries".

Days later, Chinese ambassador Jiang Zaidong described the attacks as "unacceptable" and warned that security concerns were becoming a "constraint to CPEC".

In the wake of the October blast, and the string of previous attacks, a Chinese executive reportedly said that Beijing has been in discussions with Islamabad about allowing Chinese security companies to operate in Pakistan. However, the executive added that Beijing has been "explicitly rebuffed" by Pakistan "several times".

Amid these developments, Chinese investments in Pakistan have declined sharply, according to the report. Citing the Frontier Services Group, it said that delays and cancellations of projects have increased due to instability, with many Chinese workers returning home. The group's 2023 annual report reportedly noted that employees of Chinese companies in Pakistan had been encouraged to leave due to safety concerns.

Noting that the challenges in Pakistan have amplified dissatisfaction among Chinese investors and workers, the news report quoted an executive at a large Chinese security firm as saying, "The government is failing to comprehensively solve this security problem."

#### **China pushing to deploy its own security staff to protect citizens in Pak: Report**

13 November 2024, [Times of India](#)

Beijing is pushing Pakistan to allow its own security staff to provide protection to thousands of Chinese citizens working in the South Asian nation, during talks after a car bombing in Karachi that was seen as a major

security breach, sources said. Last month's airport bombing in the southern port city that killed two Chinese engineers returning to work on a project after a holiday in Thailand was the latest in a string of attacks on Beijing's interests in Pakistan. The attacks, and Islamabad's failure to deter them, have angered China, which has pushed Pakistan to begin formal negotiations for a joint security management system.

Reuters spoke to five Pakistani security and govt sources with direct knowledge of the previously unreported negotiations, and reviewed a written proposal sent by Beijing to Islamabad. "They (Chinese) want to bring in their own security," said one official, who sat in on a recent meeting, adding that Pakistan had not so far agreed to such a step. A written proposal sent to Islamabad by Beijing, and forwarded to Pakistani security agencies for review, mentioned a clause allowing the dispatching of security agencies and military forces into each others' territory to assist in counter-terrorism missions and conduct joint strikes. The dispatching would be done after discussions, but Pakistani agencies were averse to the proposal, one official said.

Neither Beijing nor Islamabad confirmed the talks officially. The source, and two other officials, said there was a consensus on setting up a joint security management system, and that Pakistan was amenable to Chinese officials sitting in on security meetings and co-ordination. But there was no agreement on their participating in security arrangements on the ground. The first official said Pakistan had asked China for help in improving its intelligence and surveillance capabilities instead of direct involvement. The nature of the Karachi bombing has angered Beijing: A pick-up truck rigged with nearly 100 kg of explosives waited unchecked for 40 minutes near the outermost security cordon of the heavily guarded airport before its driver rammed it into the vehicle carrying Chinese engineers, officials said. "It was a grave security breach," admitted one of the officials investigating the blast. Investigators believe the attackers had "inside help" in securing details of the itinerary and route.

### **China to continue support for Pakistan's counter-terrorism efforts**

11 November 2024, [Reuters](#)

China will continue to support Pakistan in counter-terrorism operations, a foreign ministry spokesperson said on Monday, after two Chinese nationals were wounded in a shooting in the country's commercial hub Karachi last week.

China and Pakistan have the determination and ability to thwart all attempts to undermine China-Pakistan

relations and make terrorists pay the price, spokesperson Lin Jian told a regular news conference in Beijing.

### **At least 26 people killed by bomb blast at southwestern Pakistan rail station**

09 November 2024, [PBS](#)

A suicide bomber blew himself up at a train station in restive southwestern Pakistan on Saturday, killing at least 26 people, including soldiers and railway staff, and wounding about 62 others, some critically, officials said.

The attack happened when nearly 100 passengers were waiting for a train to travel to the garrison city of Rawalpindi from Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province, according to Hamza Shafqaat, a senior government administrator.

When asked about a security breach that led to the bombing, Shafqaat told reporters that "it is usually very difficult to stop such suicide attacks."

However, Shahid Nawaz, who is in charge of security at Quetta's train station, insisted there was no breach as the attacker was disguised as a passenger and blew himself up among people at the station.

TV footage showed the steel structure of the platform's roof blown apart and a destroyed tea stall. Luggage was strewn everywhere. Most of the victims were taken to a state-owned hospital and some to a military one.

Wasim Baig, a spokesman for the health department and police said over a dozen soldiers and six railway employees were among the dead at the station, where a walk-through gate has been installed to check whether anyone is carrying explosives. Still, there are multiple other entrances to the station without such security.

A separatist group, the Balochistan Liberation Army, claimed the attack in a statement, saying a suicide bomber targeted troops present at the railway station. The outlawed BLA has long waged an insurgency seeking independence from Islamabad.

A senior superintendent of police operations, Muhammad Baloch, said separatists frequently attacked soft targets.

"When their people are arrested, they also attack in retaliation. We all have to fight this war. We are resilient. Our teams are here and trying to save as many lives as we can."

Police said some of the critically wounded passengers had died in the hospital, raising the death toll.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif denounced the bombing in a statement, saying those who orchestrated the attack "will pay a very heavy price for it," adding that security forces were determined to eliminate "the menace of terrorism."

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry also condemned the bombing and expressed its condolences to the families of the victims, as did the Russian Embassy in Islamabad.

Saturday's assault came a little over a week after a powerful bomb attached to a motorcycle exploded near a vehicle carrying police officers assigned to protect polio workers in the province, killing nine people, including five children who were nearby.

In August, the BLA carried out multiple coordinated attacks on passengers buses, police and security forces across Balochistan, killing more than 50 people, mostly civilians.

Oil- and mineral-rich Balochistan is Pakistan's largest but also least populated province. It is a hub for the country's ethnic Baloch minority whose members say they face discrimination and exploitation by the central government. Along with separatist groups, Islamic militants also operate in the province.

The BLA mostly targets security forces and foreigners, especially Chinese nationals who are in Pakistan as part of Beijing's multibillion-dollar [Belt and Road Initiative](#), which is working on major infrastructure projects. The group often demands the halt of all Chinese-funded projects and for workers to leave Pakistan to avoid further attacks.

Last month, the BLA claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing that targeted a convoy with Chinese nationals outside Karachi airport, killing two. Beijing has asked Pakistan to ensure the safety of its citizens working in Balochistan and other parts of the country.

### **PM visits Chinese embassy to condemn firing on Chinese nationals in Karachi**

06 November 2024, [Pakistan Today](#)

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday visited the Chinese Embassy to condemn the firing incident, in Karachi yesterday, in which Chinese nationals were injured and assured exemplary punishment to those involved in the incident.

Talking to Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong, the prime minister said that he came to condemn the yesterday's attack on Chinese nationals and to inquire after the health of those injured in the incident.

The prime minister assured the Chinese ambassador that those responsible in the incident would be apprehended soon and would be awarded exemplary punishment.

He further informed the Chinese ambassador that he was personally supervising the process of arresting those involved in the incident and bringing them to justice.

Moreover, he had directed to provide the best medical facilities to the Chinese citizens injured in the incident,

he said, adding that it was a matter of satisfaction that the health of the injured Chinese nationals was improving.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Interior Mohsin Raza Naqvi and Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi accompanied the prime minister.

Prime Minister Sharif said that China was a long-standing friend of Pakistan and the attack on the Chinese nationals was a desperate attempt to damage Pakistan-China fraternal relations.

He reiterated that the security of Chinese nationals, working in Pakistan, was the top priority of the government.

The Chinese ambassador thanked the prime minister for his visit and hoped that he would play his role in bringing those responsible for the incident to justice soon.

### **Pakistan watches China-India border thaw with mixed feelings over Kashmir**

03 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Tom Hussain

[Pakistan](#) is watching with a mix of relief and concern as its close ally [China](#) and arch-rival [India](#) seek to de-escalate a four-year stand-off along their disputed Himalayan border.

While Islamabad has remained officially silent on the recent military repositioning, analysts say the easing of tensions at the point in [Kashmir](#) where their three frontiers meet is welcomed news.

"Any development that contributes to the stability and security of the region will be welcome in Pakistan," said Maleeha Lodhi, a former Pakistani ambassador to Britain, the United States, and the United Nations.

De-escalation of Sino-Indian tensions is "good news for South Asia at a time when the situation is so fraught elsewhere in the world", she said.

India's Ministry of External Affairs announced an agreement with China on October 21 for "disengagement and resolution of issues" in border areas, following violent clashes that resulted in the deaths of 24 soldiers in June 2020.

The Chinese foreign ministry subsequently confirmed that both sides had "reached a solution" after "close communication" through diplomatic and military channels.

However, analysts say Pakistan remains frustrated by India's refusal to engage over their own border dispute in Kashmir.

Despite a ceasefire agreement in February 2021 aimed at reducing skirmishes along the contested border, diplomatic relations between the South Asian neighbours have remained largely frozen since 2019.

In a rare visit, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar attended a Shanghai Cooperation

Organisation conference in Islamabad last month, marking the first ministerial visit since 2015.

He did not engage in formal bilateral dialogue, but during an informal discussion, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reportedly urged Jaishankar to allow India's cricket team to play in a major tournament Pakistan is hosting early next year.

India's Ministry of External Affairs later denied that such a request had been made, stating that "nothing of the sort" happened.

Islamabad understands that "shared concerns about India are one of the driving forces" of the China-Pakistan partnership, said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Centre, a Washington think tank.

He cautioned that any signs of a rapprochement between India and China could be "problematic" for Islamabad.

Yet with its own domestic crises, Pakistan has "enough to worry about at home" and may find some solace in the reduced likelihood of a renewed border clash between its two powerful neighbours, "at least for now", Kugelman said.

Farwa Aamer, director of South Asia Initiatives at the New York-based Asia Society Policy Institute, said Pakistan would closely monitor developments between China and India, while prioritising its own internal security issues that "must be addressed urgently".

This year, two suicide attacks by militants on Chinese nationals and Belt and Road Initiative projects have resulted in the deaths of seven Chinese citizens, prompting Beijing last month to advise its citizens against travel to Pakistan's western provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a public reprimand, China's ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong, expressed frustration over the attacks, saying "it is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months".

He urged Pakistan to take action against "all anti-China terrorist groups", emphasising that "security is the biggest concern" for Beijing and crucial for the success of the US\$65 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. "Without a safe and sound environment, nothing can be achieved," the Chinese envoy warned.

Despite these challenges, analysts are confident China will maintain a close relationship with Pakistan given their economic and strategic alignment.

Pakistan Foreign Office spokeswoman Mumtaz Baloch responded to the Chinese ambassador's comments on Thursday, describing his remarks as "perplexing" and reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to the safety of its "Chinese brothers" within the South Asian nation.

Analysts say Pakistan lacks the political and economic clout necessary to compel India to engage in meaningful dialogue.

India sees "more advantages with knock-on effects from rapprochement with China than it does with Pakistan", Kugelman said.

While better relations with Beijing could enhance investment opportunities, India sees little advantage in expanding commercial ties with Islamabad and "isn't looking for these outcomes", he added.

Yogesh Gupta, a former Indian ambassador, said the "main problem" in the bilateral relationship was that Pakistan "resorts to terrorism to achieve its political objectives and the issue of Kashmir".

India has "paid a huge price to control terrorism" in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere, Gupta said, and "can't condone this problem".

"If Pakistan moves ahead on these issues, then a dialogue with India can take place," he added.

However, Pakistan has refused to accept any unilateral change to the status of Kashmir, over which it has fought two major wars with India. In 2020, New Delhi revoked the special status of the parts of Kashmir that it administers, ending the region's own laws and autonomy and sparking widespread protests.

Lodhi, the former Pakistani ambassador, said that the government of Indian Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) had shown "no interest" in resuming talks with Islamabad, "apparently concluding that the absence of dialogue hurts Pakistan and not India".

Consequently, the recent easing of tensions between China and India is "unlikely to have a knock-on effect on Pakistan-India relations", she said.

Aamer noted that the diplomatic dynamics between India and China differ significantly from those with Pakistan. While both China and India have engaged in substantial border negotiations and share economic interests as major players in the Global South, similar motivations for dialogue with Pakistan have yet to emerge.

As both India and China continue work to address their border differences, former Indian ambassador Gupta emphasised that withdrawing troops from "eyeball confrontation" and resuming patrols would be essential for maintaining stability.

"This will help in the maintenance of peace, security, and good neighbourly relations," he said, although he acknowledged that it would "require a lot of patient handling on both sides".

Aamer said that such confidence-building measures from China and India help to signal that the situation in the region "isn't acutely tense", ultimately benefiting South Asia as a whole – "something that should be in the interest of all parties", she said.

## Pak missions in China to have 20 new trade posts

04 November 2024, [The News](#), Mariana Baabar

Approval is given in an attempt to expand Pakistan's exports and reduce current trade deficit with China. There has been mixed reaction to the decision by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in which he has approved the setting up of 20 new trade posts at the Pakistan Embassy in Beijing and at the different consulates in China.

The approval was given by the prime minister at the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) meeting on November 2, in an attempt to expand Pakistan's exports and reduce the current trade deficit with China.

"It was during the Business Conference in Shenzhen during the visit of the prime minister when it was evident that with existing less than even modest human resource for investment and trade promotion, the goal of enhancing Pakistan's exports and a robust economic relationship with China will remain elusive," an official tells *The News*.

Almost all these posts are local (staff level) employees, but not confined to the Embassy alone. In fact these posts will be spread out not only to Pakistan Embassy in Beijing but also to Pakistan's four Consulates in Chengdu, Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Shanghai.

"The Pakistan Embassy will hire local staff as Trade Development Officers and Investment Officers. The Embassy needs this human resource because they are severely deficient in that," the official said adding that this decision has been conveyed to the different ministries in Islamabad.

However, while officials and diplomats *The News* contacted, welcomed these new decisions saying it will have far reaching results in trade ties with China, there were others who were not so easily convinced. Reacting to the decision by the ECC to create new trade posts in China, renowned economist Dr Kaiser Bengali completely disagreed. Earlier, he had resigned from the Austerity Committee, the high-powered committee for rightsizing in the federal government.

"How inane! Over 20 new trade offices to be set up in China to boost exports! More non-development expenditure! The key to exports is revival of industrial sector to produce more, better n cheaper, not creating more bureaucratic positions," he remarked on Twitter. But officials insist that having staff with Chinese language skills and knowledge of local business scene, can be helpful in developing linkages with the local businesses. "Given the breadth of China (bigger than Europe) there is a need to reach out to various provinces and municipalities and these new staff will prove useful in reaching out to the breadth of businesses across China", another official remarked.

## China- Taiwan

### Taiwan's Lai provokes China's ire with planned US visit

30 November 2024, [DW](#)

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te is to visit US soil during a seven-day trip that he says aims to enhance exchanges with Taiwan's allies. China has slammed the trip as a step toward independence from Beijing.

Taiwanese President **Lai Ching-te** set off on Saturday on a **week-long trip to visit partners of his country** that will include stopovers on US territory, much to the anger of **Beijing**.

The trip, Lai's first overseas since taking office, has provoked **fierce threats from China**, which sees the self-governing democratic island of **Taiwan** as its territory and opposes any international recognition of its sovereignty.

#### 'New era of values-based democracy'

Lai's trip will see him make stopovers in Hawaii and the US territory of Guam, in addition to visits to partners in the South Pacific, including the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau.

The US is Taiwan's most important supporter, and is the top benefactor of the island's defense capabilities under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, even though Washington has no official diplomatic relations with Taipei.

Lai's trip follows the US's approval of the proposed sale to Taiwan of spare parts for F-16 fighter jets and radar systems, as well as communications equipment. In all, the deals are valued at \$385 million (€364 million).

Upon departing, Lai said: "I'd like to thank the US government for adhering to the principles of safety, dignity, comfort and convenience in facilitating the success of this trip," and that the trip "ushered in a new era of values-based democracy."

He said he wanted to "continue to expand cooperation and deepen partnerships with our allies based on the values of democracy, peace and prosperity."

The Marshall Islands, **Tuvalu** and Palau are the only Pacific island nations among the 12 remaining allies that recognize Taiwan, with China persuading others to drop their support for Taipei by promising aid and investment.

#### Chinese condemnation

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has reiterated that it is against official interactions between the US and Taiwan, including any visits by Taiwanese leaders to US territory.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning described Lai's planned stopover in the US territory of Guam as "separatist actions."



"We have consistently opposed official exchanges between the United States and Taiwan ... and any form of the US condoning and supporting Taiwan independence separatists and their separatist actions," she said on Thursday.

Lai has in the past been **branded a "separatist" by China**, which has vowed to "resolutely crush" any attempts at gaining independence.

Beijing **regularly conducts war games near the island** in what is widely seen as an attempt at intimidation.

### Pro-Taiwan Lithuania expels three Chinese diplomats

30 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

Lithuania has on Nov 29 asked three staff members of China's representative office, a type of diplomatic mission, to leave the country for being in violation of the Vienna Convention and Lithuanian legislation. No further details were provided.

China has already downgraded ties with Lithuania and pressured multinationals to sever links with the Baltic nation of 2.9 million people after it allowed Taiwan to open a de facto embassy there in 2021, noted *Reuters* Nov 29.

Declaring them as *personae non gratae*, Lithuania's foreign ministry has cited violations of the 1961 Vienna Convention, which outlines the rules of diplomatic law.

The Chinese diplomatic staff have been instructed to leave Lithuania within a week, the ministry has said in a statement, exacerbating sour relations between the two countries.

The latest development apparently had its beginning in March, when the chief of Lithuania's counter-intelligence said Chinese interference in this year's elections could not be ruled out due to the EU and NATO member's support for Taiwan.

In addition, a Chinese ship is suspected of being involved in damage to two undersea cables recently, one of which runs between Sweden and Lithuania, the report noted.

### Foreign Minister Dr Rana off to China

28 November 2024, [RFA](#)

#### The island's foreign minister called on China not to 'overreact' to Lai's foreign trip.

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te will visit Hawaii and the U.S. territory of Guam on a trip to the Pacific that will include stops in three diplomatic allies, media reported, after the government called on China not to "overreact" to his travels.

China views Taiwan as its territory and it objects to any country or organization treating it as a state. In

particular, China gets infuriated by visits by Taiwan leaders to the United States, and by visits by U.S. officials to Taiwan.



Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te arrives at a ceremony commemorating the war against Chinese forces on the frontline island in Kinmen, Taiwan, Aug. 23, 2024. (Ann Wong/Reuters)

Lai sets off on Saturday for visits to the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau, his first overseas trip since taking office on May 20. He would also visit Hawaii and Guam, Taiwan's Central News Agency, or CNA, reported on Thursday.

"The president will stay in Hawaii for two nights before visiting the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, then transit through Guam before heading to Palau," CNA cited an unidentified government source as saying.

"During the layovers in the U.S., Lai plans to hold closed-door discussions with think tanks and meet with local Taiwanese communities," it said.

A spokesperson for China's defence ministry said China objected to the trip, the AFP news agency reported.

"We firmly oppose official interaction with China's Taiwan region in any form," the spokesperson, Wu Qian, told a press conference.

"The Chinese (military) shoulders the sacred mission of safeguarding national sovereignty... and will resolutely crush all secessionist attempts for Taiwan independence," Wu said.

Taiwan's foreign minister, Lin Chia-lung, speaking before the president's office announced the Hawaii and Guam stops on the trip, called on China not to use the Pacific trip as an excuse to stage military exercises.

"We call on Beijing not to use the long-standing practice [of Taiwan's presidents traveling overseas] as a pretense to overreact, for example, by holding military exercises that risk destabilizing cross-strait relations," said CNA in a separate report, citing Lin.

Reuters news agency on Wednesday reported that China would likely launch military drills near the island, using Lai's to the Pacific and the expected U.S. transit stop as a pretext, citing regional security officials. China launched intensive military exercises around Taiwan in 2022 after then U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi became the highest-ranking U.S. official in 25 years to visit Taiwan.

China also froze top-level military talks and other dialogue with the U.S. in response to the Pelosi visit.

Chinese forces have held frequent drills in the air and seas around the island since then.

Beijing has over the years successfully swayed several of Taipei's diplomatic allies to shift their recognition to China. As of Nov. 28, only 12 countries maintained official diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

### China could launch military drills near Taiwan over president's Pacific visit, sources say

27 November 2024, [Reuters](#), Yimou Lee and Ben Blanchard

China is likely to launch military drills in the coming days near Taiwan, using President Lai Ching-te's upcoming trip to the Pacific and scheduled U.S. transit as a pretext, according to assessments by Taiwan and regional security officials.

Lai will start a visit to Taipei's three diplomatic allies in the Pacific on Saturday, and sources told Reuters he was planning stops in [Hawaii](#) and the U.S. territory of Guam in a sensitive trip coming shortly after the U.S. election.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and the most important issue in its relations with Washington, has a strong dislike of Lai whom Beijing calls a "separatist".

Lai's office has yet to confirm details of what are officially stop-overs in the United States, but is expected to do so shortly before he departs, sources familiar with the trip have previously said.

Beijing could conduct military manoeuvres around or shortly after Lai's trip which ends on Dec. 6, said four officials in the region briefed on the matter, who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the topic.

China's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment, though the government has urged the United States not to permit Lai to transit.

Chen Binhua, spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said on Wednesday that Lai's transit stops were "essentially provocative acts that violate the one-China principle".

Taiwan's presidential office said in a statement that if China were to use Lai's trip as an excuse to launch military exercises, "it would be a blatant provocation of the status quo of peace and stability in the region".

Taiwan's defence ministry said in a separate statement any deliberate attempt to create tension in the Taiwan Strait would undermine peace and stability, which is not "the proper behaviour of a responsible modern country".

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

China has already staged two rounds of major exercises around Taiwan this year to pressure Taipei,

one in [May](#) and one in [October](#), dubbed "Joint Sword - 2024A" and B, respectively.

China could "repackage" ongoing regular military activities in the South China Sea or the East China Sea, moving them closer to Taiwan and rebranding them "Joint Sword - 2024C," according to a Taiwan security official.

Beijing could expand the size of its regular "joint combat readiness patrol" that typically involves naval and air force drills near Taiwan during Lai's visit and launch a "targeted" exercise towards the end of the trip, the source said. China could "repackage" ongoing regular military activities in the South China Sea or the East China Sea, moving them closer to Taiwan and rebranding them "Joint Sword - 2024C," according to a Taiwan security official.

Beijing could expand the size of its regular "joint combat readiness patrol" that typically involves naval and air force drills near Taiwan during Lai's visit and launch a "targeted" exercise towards the end of the trip, the source said.

Between 20 and 30 Chinese naval vessels are involved in the ongoing military manoeuvres this week in the South China Sea, the source added.

'RED LINE'

Beijing wants to show the incoming U.S. administration of President-elect Donald Trump that the first island chain is "China's sphere of influence" and Lai's trip could become a "pretext", the official said, referring to an area that runs from Japan through Taiwan, the Philippines and on to Borneo, enclosing China's coastal seas.

"Beijing hopes to draw a red line and establish its power" during the U.S. government transition and extend its sphere of influence, the official said, adding the military drills were meant for the United States and its allies.

A second source, a Taiwan-based regional security official, said the drills would probably be more limited in scope than the two earlier rounds this year given unstable winter weather conditions in the Taiwan Strait.

A third source, familiar with security assessments around Taiwan, said China could use exercises in the coming weeks to test the bottom line of the Trump administration.

Two of the sources said more favourable weather conditions may prompt an earlier or delayed display of force in the days around Lai's trip.

Taiwan presidents typically take advantage of stop-overs in the United States going to and from far-flung allies to give speeches and meet with friendly politicians. Lai will be visiting the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau, three of the 12 remaining countries maintaining official diplomatic ties with Taipei.

It would not be unprecedented for China to respond militarily to this trip. It did so in August of last year

when then-Vice President Lai returned from the United States, and in April of last year upon then-President Tsai Ing-wen's return from California. Lai and his ruling Democratic Progressive Party reject Beijing's sovereignty claims, saying only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

### Taiwan reports Chinese balloon, first time in six months

25 November 2024, [Reuters](#)

Taiwan's defence ministry on Monday reported that a Chinese balloon had been detected over the sea to Taiwan's north, the first time since April it has reported such an incident in what Taipei views as part of a pattern of harassment by Beijing.

Taiwan, which China claims as its own territory, complained that in the weeks leading up to its presidential election in January [Chinese balloon](#) activity took place at an "unprecedented scale".

It described the incidents as part of a Chinese pressure campaign - so-called grey-zone warfare designed to exhaust a foe using irregular tactics without open combat.

Taiwan strongly objects to China's sovereignty claims and says only the island's people can decide their future.

The ministry, in its regular morning update on Chinese military activities over the previous 24 hours, said the single balloon was detected at 6:21 p.m. (1021 GMT) on Sunday 60 nautical miles (111 km) to the north of Taiwan's Keelung port.

It then vanished some two hours later, having flown at an altitude of 33,000 ft (10,000 metres), but without crossing Taiwan itself, the ministry said.

China's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

China has previously dismissed Taiwan's complaints about the balloons, saying they were for meteorological purposes and should not be hyped up for political reasons.

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

### PRC threatens regional stability: Taipei

18 November 2024, [Taipei Times](#), Lee I-chia

**ONE LAST TALK: While Xi said that Taiwan was a 'red line,' Biden, in what is likely his last meeting with Xi as president, called for an end to China's military activity around Taiwan**

China's military intimidation and economic coercion against Taiwan are the main causes of tensions that are destabilizing peace in the Taiwan Strait, Taipei said yesterday while thanking US President Joe Biden for expressing Washington's firm stance of maintaining peace and stability in the region.

Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) met on Saturday for their third meeting and their first talks in seven months on the sidelines of the APEC forum in Lima, Peru.

It was likely Biden's last meeting as president with Xi. During their conversation, Biden reiterated the US' opposition to any unilateral change to the "status quo" from either side, that it expects cross-strait differences to be resolved peacefully and that the world has an interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Biden also called for an end to destabilizing military activity by the People's Republic of China (PRC) around Taiwan.

Xi told Biden that the "Taiwan issue, democracy and human rights, pathways and systems, and development interests are China's four red lines that must not be challenged," according to state-run China Central Television.

"These are the most important guardrails and safety net for China-US relations," Xi said.

"The separatist actions of 'Taiwan independence' are incompatible with peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," he added.

Xi also told Biden that Washington "should not intervene in bilateral disputes ... and not condone or support provocative impulses" in the South China Sea. He also said that China's position on the war in Ukraine was "open and aboveboard" and that Beijing would not allow tensions on the Korean Peninsula to "descend into conflict or chaos," the broadcaster reported.

China would "strive for a smooth transition" in relations with the US and is ready to work with the incoming administration of US president-elect Donald Trump, Xi said.

In Taipei, the Mainland Affairs Council yesterday said that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) posed several challenges, including military intimidation and economic coercion, that affect security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, and are part of an attempt to force others to accept Beijing's political views.

"Beijing wants to change the rules-based international order, and that has attracted widespread attention from the international community," it said. "This is also the main cause of tensions in cross-strait relations and instability in the Taiwan Strait."

The council said that the government's cross-strait policy seeks steady, pragmatic and consistent relations with China, as well as the prosperity and development of the Indo-Pacific region, which has been affirmed by

mainstream public opinion in Taiwan and the international community.

“In the face of the CCP’s continued aggression toward Taiwan, we will stand firm in protecting the constitutional system of the Republic of China” (ROC), it said. “We will maintain the status quo and we will resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and dignity.” Beijing should pragmatically face the facts of the current situation across the Strait, abandon coercive claims and actions, and engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan’s democratically elected government to resolve differences, it added.

China is the biggest destabilizing force in the Indo-Pacific region, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) said in a separate statement.

“The ministry also thanks the Biden administration for affirming the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and for continuing to take concrete actions to maintain it,” it said.

Those actions include a joint statement by Japan, South Korea and the US issued on Friday, which reiterated that “peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is an indispensable element of security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region,” it said.

The three countries also established the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, responsible for coordinating and implementing their shared commitments, including working together to ensure the region is thriving, connected, resilient, stable and secure, it added.

The ministry also addressed a news release issued by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it said included misleading claims about Taiwan and Taiwan-US relations.

The MOFA reiterated that “the ROC and the PRC are not subordinate to each other.”

“As the US and other countries have repeatedly pointed out, China, which continues its provocative military actions surrounding Taiwan, is the biggest source of tension that is undermining peace and stability in the region and posing a serious threat to global economic prosperity,” the ministry said.

It said it welcomes the international community’s concerns over China’s efforts to threaten the “status quo” in the region and calls for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

As a responsible member of the international community, Taiwan would implement its “four pillars of peace” plan to enhance its self-defense capabilities, it said.

Taiwan would also work with the US and like-minded countries to ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the Taiwan Strait and Indo-Pacific region, it added.

Additional reporting by AFP, Chen Yu-fu and Huang Ching-hsuan

## Taiwan rebuts remarks made by China's Xi at APEC meeting with Biden

18 November 2024, Focus Taiwan

Taiwan on Sunday rebutted remarks made by Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) during his meeting with U.S. President Joe Biden at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Lima, Peru.

Xi's comments were "targeted, contrary to the facts, and deliberately setting limits on Taiwan-U.S. relations," according to a statement issued by the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Taiwan's top government agency in charge of relations with China. During his meeting with the U.S. leader on Saturday (Peru time), Xi had named "the Taiwan question" -- along with "democracy and human rights, China's path and system, and China's development right" -- as "red line" issues for Beijing that "must not be challenged" by other countries.

Xi also mentioned Lai Ching-te (賴清德), Taiwan's president and leader of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), by name.

"If the U.S. side cares about maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait, it is crucial that it sees clearly the true nature of Lai Ching-te and the DPP authorities in seeking 'Taiwan independence,' handles the Taiwan question with extra prudence, unequivocally opposes 'Taiwan independence,' and supports China's peaceful reunification," according to a readout of the meeting published by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sunday.

In response, the MAC said in its statement that the Taiwan government's cross-strait policies are "steady, pragmatic and consistent" and "recognized by Taiwanese mainstream public opinion and the international community."

"In the face of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) continued civil and military attacks on Taiwan, we will firmly uphold the constitutional system of the Republic of China [Taiwan's official name], neither be humble nor arrogant, maintain the status quo, resolutely safeguard national sovereignty and dignity, and strive to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and in the region."

"President Lai made it clear during his inauguration and National Day speeches that Taiwan will work with its democratic partners to hold up a 'democratic umbrella' to protect democratic partner countries from the threat of authoritarian expansion and work together to promote world democratic peace and prosperity," the MAC said.

The MAC statement also criticized Beijing's "military intimidation and economic coercion" toward Taiwan and other countries in the Indo-Pacific region, noting that these actions had been the main cause of



"tensions" and "instability to peace" in cross-strait relations.

"The Mainland Affairs Council calls on the Beijing authorities to pragmatically face the objective facts of the current situation across the Taiwan Strait, abandon coercive claims and actions, engage in meaningful dialogue with Taiwan's democratically elected and legitimate government to resolve differences, and jointly shoulder the international responsibility for maintaining regional security and global peace."

The White House also issued a readout of the Xi-Biden meeting on Sunday (U.S. time), in which the American president was described as telling the Chinese leader that "the United States' one China policy remains unchanged."

President Biden also "reiterated that the United States opposes any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side, that we expect cross-Strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means, and that the world has an interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait." Biden also "called for an end to destabilizing PRC military activity around Taiwan" in his meeting with Xi, according to the White House.

### Taiwan's business leaders are finding ways to reduce their exposure in China

18 November 2024, [NPR](#), Emily Feng

Amid geopolitical uncertainties, Taiwan has slashed its investment in China to the lowest level in nearly a quarter century as the island strives to "derisk" itself from its powerful neighbor.

MARY LOUISE KELLY, HOST:

President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping held their last official meeting over the weekend outside a summit in Peru. Once again, the issue of Taiwan came up. The Chinese government has long claimed the self-governed Asian island as its own territory and long said it will never renounce the use of force to resolve that issue if necessary. Well, in Taiwan, business leaders are finding ways to reduce their exposure in China. NPR's Emily Feng reports from the island.

EMILY FENG, BYLINE: If you're a fan of bubble tea, well, it was invented here in Taiwan, and a lot of the tapioca starch bubbles are still made here.

CHOU CHIAH-YU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: Including in this factory belonging to the Ditiantai company in southern Taiwan.

It smells like brown sugar.

Chou Chiah-yu, one of the managers, shows me around his bubble tea factory...

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: ...Which processes and rolls enough tapioca to make more than 600,000 pounds' worth of bubble tea bubbles a day. Ditiantai sells brown sugar-flavored

bubbles to Japan, Europe, the U.S. and China. But that's starting to change.

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: Chou says Thailand is now their big focus...

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: ...Where labor costs are way lower and risks, in his view, are also lower.

(Speaking Chinese).

Unlike the previous generation of Taiwanese entrepreneurs, Chou is among the new generation, who sees opportunities outside China's gigantic consumer market. This is in part because of warnings from other entrepreneurs, or Taishang, as they're called locally.

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: Chou tells me other Taishang have warned him Chinese capital control laws make it very difficult to get money out of the country. It's a place with no guarantees.

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: Then Chou says, rather euphemistically, there are the political problems with China, meaning the risk of China seizing Taiwanese assets, blocking their imports or even invading Taiwan. Taiwanese firms are reacting to this risk. They slashed investment into China last year to the lowest in nearly a quarter century. Spending in China by Taiwan companies dropped nearly 40%, though this year it rebounded somewhat.

SCOTT KENNEDY: Taiwanese companies can be the canary in the mine.

FENG: This is Scott Kennedy, a China and Taiwan expert at the Washington-based think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies. He and his colleagues now do a survey each year of Taiwanese firms. This year, they found about over a third of firms had already moved some of their operations out of China.

KENNEDY: Uncertainty that comes with growing U.S.-China tensions, whether it's around tariffs or export controls.

FENG: But Kennedy stresses Taiwan is not decoupling from China entirely. Taiwanese manufacturers are only moving part of their businesses.

KENNEDY: They're moving somewhere between 11- and 25% of their business, so they are keeping a lot of their operations in China, but moving some of them to new locales - Southeast Asia, India, back to Taiwan.

FENG: Chen Chern-Chyi, Taiwan's deputy economic affairs minister, says since 2016, Taiwan has been actively incentivizing the shift to South and Southeast Asia.

CHEN CHERN-CHYI: With respect to investment, it's like 130% compared to 2016. So we are of the view this is quite successful.

FENG: He says Taiwanese EMS, or electronics manufacturing companies...



CHEN: Almost all the major Taiwan EMS companies now, they have investment in India. They have investment in Vietnam.

FENG: With South and Southeast Asia being the focus, the Taiwanese trade and investment leaving China is not necessarily coming back to Taiwan, however. Chou at the Ditiantai bubble tea factory, for example, says he is avoiding China, but also avoiding expansion in Taiwan.

CHOU: (Speaking Chinese).

FENG: He says their clients around the world are already asking them to have a backup plan should China invade Taiwan. They want to know, if there's a war, can they still get their tapioca bubble tea balls?

### **Former Taiwan Navy officer praises Chinese military, sparks outrage**

16 November 2024, [ANI](#)

A retired Taiwan Navy officer has provoked widespread criticism after attending a military air show in Zhuhai, China, and publicly lauding the strength of China's air force and military advancements.

Retired Lieutenant Commander Lu Li-shih attended the International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, which began on Tuesday, where he was interviewed by reporters.

In a video that quickly circulated in Taiwan and China, Lu praised the military equipment on display, saying, "I want to share the truth and tell Taiwanese viewers how strong our China is." He also expressed admiration for "Chinese national integration and rejuvenation," Taiwan News reported.

His remarks have drawn sharp criticism from Taiwanese authorities and legislators. Legislator Lin Chu-yin called Lu's remarks "disgusting." Meanwhile, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) issued a statement urging retired officers to remain cautious in their words and actions to avoid harming Taiwan's reputation.

The MND clarified that since Lu retired as a lieutenant commander rather than a higher-ranked officer, he is not subject to penalties such as losing his pension or being stripped of his rank.

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) also condemned Lu's statements as "deeply regrettable." However, MAC Deputy Chief Liang Wen-chieh stated that the government does not intend to impose punitive measures against Lu, emphasising that Taiwan's policy opposes any commendation of China's military forces, which pose a threat to Taiwan, reported Taiwan News.

Despite the backlash, Lu appeared on CTI television on Thursday to reiterate his views. He praised China's military advancements and the confidence of its people while taking the opportunity to

criticise Taiwan's military capabilities. His remarks have further intensified the controversy, fuelling debate over the responsibilities of retired military personnel and their potential influence on cross-strait relations.

The situation has brought into question the extent to which retired officers should exercise caution in their public statements, particularly when such remarks have the potential to impact Taiwan's international standing.

### **Beijing urges US not to let Taiwan's William Lai transit through country**

15 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Holly Chik

### **'Stop sending wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces,' Beijing's foreign ministry tells US, a day after similar message to Canada**

Beijing has urged Washington not to allow Taiwanese leader William Lai Ching-te to transit via the United States, ahead of his reported plans to visit the Pacific islands.

This came a day after Beijing urged Ottawa to abide by its "one China" commitment, with Lai's predecessor Tsai Ing-wen reportedly scheduled to visit Canada next week.

Reuters reported on Friday that Lai was set to visit Taiwan's diplomatic allies in the Pacific in the coming weeks, with plans to stop over in the US state of Hawaii and possibly its Micronesian territory Guam, both home to major US military bases.

"Taiwan authorities use these so-called diplomatic ties to pull political agenda," Beijing's foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Friday afternoon. "These actions are useless and would not shake the trend of the time that there is one China in the world."

"China consistently opposes the US arrangements [of such transits]," he said. "We urge America to abide by the one-China principle and the three joint communiques, not allow Lai to transit through the United States and stop sending wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces."

The three joint communiques on the Taiwan issue state that the US recognises the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China, and it acknowledges Beijing's position that there is but one China, and Taiwan is part of China.

Details about Lai's visit, including the dates and names of countries to be covered, have not been released yet. Taipei has formal ties with 12 countries, including the Pacific nations of Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and Palau. Earlier this year, Nauru became the latest diplomatic ally to choose Beijing over Taiwan.

Beijing's foreign ministry also cited the one-China principle in expressing its opposition to Tsai's visit to Canada.

“China strongly opposes any visits by Taiwan separatists to countries that maintain diplomatic relations with China under any title,” Lin said on Thursday.

“We urge relevant countries to uphold the one-China principle and safeguard the political foundation of bilateral relations through concrete actions,” he said in response to a question from Reuters, which cited sources in its reporting on the coming visit.

Tsai, who completed her second and final term as leader of Taiwan in May, will deliver a speech at the Halifax International Security Forum starting on November 22 in Nova Scotia, eastern Canada, according to Reuters.

The website for this year’s conference shows that the event is “by invitation only”, but information on the agenda and speakers is not yet available.

Tsai visited the Czech Republic, France and Belgium last month, in her first overseas trip since stepping down. She spoke at a democracy conference in the Czech capital Prague, met European politicians and Taiwanese expatriates, and visited the European Parliament in Brussels.

The Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) in Beijing, which oversees cross-strait ties, said at the time that authorities in Taiwan were carrying out “Taiwan independence” separatist activities under various pretexts and deceiving the international community, according to state news agency Xinhua.

“We urge relevant countries to strictly abide by the one-China principle, handle the Taiwan issue prudently, not send wrong signals to the separatist forces and not provide any platform for them to spread their fallacies,” TAO spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian said on October 9, days ahead of Tsai’s three-nation trip.

Beijing sees Taiwan as part of China to be reunited by force if necessary and regards Tsai and Lai, both of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, as separatists who promote independence for the island.

Most countries, including the United States and Canada, do not recognise self-governed Taiwan as an independent state. However, Washington opposes any attempt to bring the island under Beijing’s control by force and is legally committed to arming it for defence.

### **Taiwan detects spike in Chinese military activity around itself**

15 November 2024, [ANI](#)

Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence (MND) reported Chinese military activity on Friday, detecting eight People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, nine People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels and one official ship.

The Ministry of Defence stated that the aircraft, vessels and the ship operating around Taiwan were

detected up until 6 am (UTC+8). According to their post on the social media platform X, "8 PLA aircraft, 9 PLAN vessels and 1 official ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 4 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly."

The Ministry said that it has monitored the situation and is responding accordingly. China has increased its military activities around Taiwan by deploying aircraft and naval vessels since September 2020. It is using grey zone tactics to achieve its security objective.

The Taiwanese MND reported Chinese military activity on Thursday, detecting five People's Liberation Army (PLA) aircraft, and nine People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels and one official ship. Taiwan MND further added that nine of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ).

"5 PLA aircraft, 9 PLAN vessels and 1 official ship operating around Taiwan were detected up until 6 a.m. (UTC+8) today. 9 of the aircraft crossed the median line and entered Taiwan's northern and southwestern ADIZ. We have monitored the situation and responded accordingly," Taiwan MND said on X. Earlier, Taiwan President Lai Ching-te convened a high-level national security conference in which he assured the public about the government's commitment to neutralising any threat to Taiwan's democracy and security after China staged a large-scale military drill around the island.

He made his remarks in response to the Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) announcement of military drills, named "Joint Sword-2024B," in the Taiwan Strait and surrounding areas, which were described as a "stern warning" to advocates of Taiwan independence, according to the Taipei Times.

### **Taiwan businessman Tsao to sue Chinese officials over sanctions**

11 November 2024, [Reuters](#)

Taiwanese businessman Robert Tsao said on Monday he would sue in a Taiwan court senior Chinese officials over sanctions they had placed on him, saying he was seeking to counter China's intimidation of lawful activity.

China, which claims Taiwan as its own territory, last month said it would punish and sanction Tsao, the retired founder of chipmaker UMC (2303.TW), opens new tab, for alleged criminal and pro-Taiwan independence activities.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office said the "Black Bear Academy" that Tsao has helped fund was seeking to incite separatism that would endanger cross-strait ties.

Tsao, one of Taiwan's richest men who has pledged to provide millions to two civilian defence training programmes, told a press conference that China was threatening the lawful holding of political views in Taiwan and his personal safety.

The lawsuit will be lodged in a Taipei court against Song Tao, head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, and also the office's spokesperson Chen Binhua.

Taiwan courts have no jurisdiction in China and senior Chinese officials do not visit the island.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not respond to a request for comment.

Cheng Wen-lung, one of Tsao's lawyers, said they knew neither Song nor Chen would come to Taiwan and there would be no way of enforcing any judgement, but the case was about sending a message to Beijing given it has been seeking to use legal means to put pressure on Taiwanese it does not like.

"Legally, we have to do this," Cheng said. "Taiwan is in a difficult spot, but we have to work hard. You cannot not do anything."

Tsao's team is also looking at suing in a U.S. court under that country's Alien Tort Claims Act.

China's announcement against Tsao came as the country's military staged a day of war games around Taiwan it said were a warning to "separatist acts". Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims.

UMC says Tsao has nothing to do with the company any longer having retired a decade ago.

### **Taiwan indicts couple for promoting Chinese political agenda amid military tensions**

07 November 2024, [ANI](#)

The Taiwan prosecutors have charged a Taiwanese couple affiliated with a pro-China political party, promoting the Chinese political agenda and affecting Taiwan elections.

The Voice of America reported that the couple, Chang Meng-Chung and his wife, Hung Wen-ting have been indicted for promoting the agenda after receiving billions of dollars from the Chinese authorities. According to Taiwan's Chiayi District Prosecutors' Office, the couple had violated Taiwan's Anti-Infiltration Act and election laws. They created radio and digital media propaganda for China after receiving 2.32 million dollars from Chinese officials for more than a decade.

The prosecutors claim that China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) in Beijing and its Fujian Province branch have paid the couples who in turn promoted Chinese

defence power and also urged Taiwan to surrender before the Chinese invasion. They further stated that the couples went to China and provided reports and plans for the promotions.

In response to persecution, Chang said, "Taiwan says it's democratic, but it's not democratic at all. The China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP) has always been championing cross-strait reunification, so what I said is the same as what the CUPP has always advocated."

The VOA reported that the couple could face 5 years of imprisonment and a fine of up to NT\$10 million. Chao Fang-yi, a non-resident fellow at the Research Institute of Democracy, Security, and Emerging Technology in Taiwan, told VOA Mandarin that the use of the Anti-Infiltration Act is significant and said, "Actually, if China wants to give them money, it may be in a very obscure way, and it may be difficult to trace it," said Chao. "So, this time, there is clear evidence so it can be prosecuted. I think it's also a pretty powerful thing."

Recently in August, the Taiwan prosecutors charged three Taiwanese in connection with CUPP, developing a spy network to trespass the Taiwan army. (ANI)

### **Taiwan reports rise in Chinese military activity as US election nears**

03 November 2024, [Reuters](#)

Taiwan's defence ministry said on Sunday it had spotted 35 Chinese military aircraft, including fighters and bombers, flying to the island's south on the way to exercises in the Pacific, a second day in a row it has reported such activities.

China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory despite the strong objections of the government in Taipei, regularly sends its military in the skies and waters near the island seeking to enforce its sovereignty claims.

China's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment on the missions, reported just days before Tuesday's U.S. presidential election.

The United States is bound by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, and its arms sales to Taipei, including a \$2 billion missile system announced last month, infuriate Beijing.

Taiwan's defence ministry said that from 9 a.m. (0100 GMT) on Sunday it had detected 37 Chinese military aircraft, including J-16 fighters, nuclear-capable H-6 bombers and drones.

Of those, 35 aircraft flew to Taiwan's southwest, south and southeast into the Western Pacific to carry out long-range training, the ministry said, adding it had sent its own forces to keep watch.

On Saturday, the ministry said China had carried out another "joint combat readiness patrol" with warships and aircraft near Taiwan.

China last month held large war games around Taiwan it said were a warning to "separatist acts", drawing condemnation from the Taiwanese and U.S. governments.

Beijing strongly dislikes Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, who took office in May, saying he is a "separatist". He says only Taiwan's people can decide their future and has repeatedly offered talks with Beijing but been rebuffed.

## US' plan to ban 200 Chinese technology companies; China's responds with this warning

29 November 2024, [Times of India](#)

Tensions are rising between the US and China over semiconductor technology, a report has said. China has threatened to retaliate against potential new US export restrictions where the Biden administration is reportedly planning to unveil curbs on chip-related exports to China and blacklist 200 companies. According to a report by news agency Reuters, the Chinese commerce ministry has responded to these reports. Spokesperson He Yadong expressed strong opposition to the US expanding its definition of national security and its “abuse” of export controls targeting Chinese companies. He argued that these actions disrupt the global trade order, destabilise industrial security, and harm cooperation within the semiconductor industry. “These actions severely disrupt the international economic and trade order, destabilise global industrial security, and harm the cooperative efforts between China and the US, as well as the global semiconductor industry,” He said.

“If the U.S. insists on escalating control measures, China will take necessary actions to resolutely protect the legitimate rights of Chinese enterprises,” he added.

### **US plans to blacklist 200 Chinese chip companies**

The US Chamber of Commerce recently alerted its members that the administration is considering blacklisting up to 200 Chinese chip companies, effectively cutting them off from most US suppliers. The US has been tightening its grip on semiconductor technology due to concerns that China might use advanced chips to bolster its military capabilities.

Bloomberg reported that the proposed restrictions would include curbs on semiconductor equipment and AI memory chips. However, the latest proposal appears to be less severe than initially anticipated, with fewer Huawei suppliers targeted and ChangXin Memory Technologies, a key player in AI memory chip development, reportedly excluded from the blacklist. The restrictions would still impact two chip factories owned by Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp (SMIC), a Huawei partner, and over 100 Chinese companies involved in producing semiconductor manufacturing equipment.

### **Why China's problems may increase**

While the decision on the reported curbs is taken by the Biden Administration, which is due to change in January. There are concerns that President-elect Donald Trump's promise to implement additional tariffs on China could trigger a trade war, Reuters said. Trump has said that his administration will impose an additional 10% tariff on all imports from China, above any existing tariffs.

# CHINA- US



## US and China swap three prisoners each in exchange

29 November 2024, [BBC](#), Holly Honderich

Three Americans detained in China were released in exchange for three Chinese prisoners in the US, after the Biden administration negotiated a prisoner swap. Mark Swidan, Kai Li, and John Leung are on their way back to the US, a spokesperson for the National Security Council (NSC) said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Soon they will return and be reunited with their families for the first time in many years," the statement said.

The exchange was reportedly months in the making, and included the release of three Chinese citizens in US custody, Chinese authorities confirmed on Wednesday.

"Through the unremitting efforts of the Chinese Government, the three Chinese citizens wrongfully detained by the United States have returned to their motherland safely," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a statement Wednesday.

"China has always been firmly opposed to the suppression and persecution of Chinese nationals by the United States for political purposes," she added.

President Biden raised the issue of Americans wrongfully detained in China directly with President Xi Jinping earlier this month when the two met during the Apec summit in Peru, according to an American official familiar with the negotiations. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also urged for their return during his visit to China in August.

"Thanks to this Administration's efforts and diplomacy with the PRC, all of the wrongfully detained Americans in the PRC are home," the NSC spokesperson said.

The swap was first reported by Politico.

Mr Swidan, 48, had been detained since 2012 and was facing the death penalty after a conviction for narcotics trafficking. Swidan denied the charges and the State Department classified him as wrongfully detained, previously raising concerns about his health. Mark Li, 60, had been held in China since September 2016 on what activists say were trumped-up spying charges.

John Leung, 78, has lead several pro-Beijing groups in the US. He was arrested in 2021 and sentenced to life in prison on espionage charges two years later.

According to the New York Times, multiple US officials said they had discussed releasing Chinese citizen Xu Yanjun, 42, who was convicted in the US on espionage charges two years ago and sentenced to 20 years in prison. Xu was first Chinese government intelligence officer ever to be extradited to the US to stand trial, the Justice Department said.

As of Wednesday morning, Xu was listed in the Bureau of Prisons system as "not in BOP custody".

The deal marks a diplomatic win for Biden in the final months of his presidency.

It follows the release of another American considered wrongfully detained: David Lin, a pastor who had been jailed in China from 2006 until his release in September.

During his four years in the White House, Biden oversaw the release of more than 70 Americans, including from Russia, Venezuela and Iran.

On Wednesday, the US also lowered its travel advisory level for mainland China to Level 2: Exercise increased caution.

## China criticises Trump tariff threat, says it won't solve America's problems

28 November 2024, [Reuters](#), Joe Cash

China attacked U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's pledge to slap additional tariffs on Chinese goods over fentanyl flows, saying his incoming administration was pushing the blame for America's opioid crisis onto China.

Trump, who takes office on Jan. 20, said on Monday he would impose a 10% tariff on Chinese goods so that Beijing does more to stop the trafficking of Chinese-made chemicals used in the highly addictive narcotic. He had threatened tariffs in excess of 60% on Chinese goods while on the campaign trail.

"China's position against unilateral tariff increases is consistent," He Yadong, a spokesperson for the commerce ministry, told a regular news briefing on Thursday. "Imposing arbitrary tariffs on trading partners will not solve America's own problems."

He added that the U.S. should abide by World Trade Organization rules and work with China to promote stable economic and trade relations.

Trump's comments fired the starting gun for what analysts expect to be a bruising four-year trade war, potentially much worse than his first term which saw tariffs of 7.5%-25% levied and global supply chains uprooted.

Indeed, Howard Lutnick, Trump's pick to run the Commerce Department and oversee the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, said in a podcast interview in October that "China is attacking America" with fentanyl and suggested Trump might levy tariffs as high as 200% on China.

Editorials in China's state media this week have warned new duties could drag the world's top two economies into a mutually destructive tariff war.

DEJA VU

There was already an eerie sense of deja vu on Thursday after China's state media praised some U.S. firms for "strong collaboration" - commentary reminiscent of how tensions with the U.S. were

covered by the Chinese press during the previous trade war.

Back then, U.S. corporate executives and foreign investors would scour Chinese state media for signals as to which U.S. firms might be in favour and which might be penalised as tensions ratcheted up.

The state-owned Global Times late on Wednesday highlighted Apple (AAPL.O), opens new tab, Tesla (TSLA.O), opens new tab, Starbucks (SBUX.O), opens new tab and HP (HPE.N), opens new tab.

"U.S. politicians need to pay attention to and respect the evident willingness of American businesses for economic and trade cooperation by tailoring suitable policy environments for enterprises," it said.

The China Daily also noted that Morgan Stanley (MS.N), opens new tab received regulatory approval in March to expand its China operations, citing this as evidence of foreign financial firms' enthusiasm for investing in China.

"Neither side was good about communicating policy directly, so business was busy looking at the tea leaves and trying to separate signal and noise in traditional and social media," a Beijing-based American executive said of the first trade war.

The executive was not authorised to speak to media and declined to be identified.

The U.S.-China trade war during Trump's first term saw China threaten to ban U.S. companies from importing, exporting and investing in China with the creation of the "Unreliable Entity List".

At the time, Global Times reported the list would target U.S. companies such as Apple, Cisco Systems (CSCO.O), opens new tab and Qualcomm (QCOM.O), opens new tab. But China never followed through on the threat and to date the list has only included U.S. companies involved in the sale of arms to Taiwan.

Bo Zhengyuan, a Shanghai-based partner at consultancy Plenum, said he expected Beijing would not rush to use tools like the Unreliable Entity List in the immediate wake of any formal tariff announcement once Trump is in power, given the weak state of the Chinese economy.

But Beijing could retaliate later if it felt U.S. policymakers were harming China's commercial interests.

"There was collateral damage last time, and there will be collateral damage this time," he added.

**China's been trying to 'Trump-proof' its economy amid his tariff threats, experts say**

27 November 2024, [ABC News](#), Selina Wang

Exports from China to the United States fell 20% last year.

Key U.S. trading partners are better equipped now to deal with President-elect Donald Trump's tariff threats than they were during his first administration, according to experts.

China has spent the last several years trying to "Trump-proof" its economy, reducing its reliance on U.S. trade. Exports from China to the U.S. fell 20% to \$427 billion in 2023.

"China's been trying to Trump-proof its economy for the last few years," said Neil Thomas, a fellow for Chinese politics at the Asia Society Policy Institute's Center for China Analysis. "We know from Trump's first term that tariff threats are often used as an opening salvo for diplomatic negotiations, so I expect there's going to be a lot of behind-the-scenes diplomacy."

Trump on Monday announced he plans to impose a 10% additional tariff on Chinese imports, as well as 25% tariff on products coming from Canada and Mexico.

American markets, so far, are mostly shrugging off Trump's latest tariff threat with stock indexes mixed.

But the Canadian dollar and Mexican peso fell against the U.S. dollar and stocks of global carmakers also fell - suggesting investors are waiting to see if Trump makes good on his proposals.

China has shifted and diversified exports to other regions, including Europe and Latin America. It has also increased investments in manufacturing in Southeast Asia, Europe, and Latin America, according to Scott Kennedy, Chinese business and economics specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

The bigger concern for China is Trump's campaign vow to slap 60% tariffs on Chinese imports. That tariff threat could still come.

Trump's latest reason for imposing tariffs on China is the flow of fentanyl into the United States.

Beijing's Ministry of Foreign Affairs pushed back on Trump's claim that China hasn't done enough to stop the flow of illicit drugs.

"China is willing to continue to carry out anti-drug cooperation with the United States on the basis of equality, mutual benefit and mutual respect," it said. "The United States should cherish China's goodwill and maintain the hard-won good situation of Sino-US anti-drug cooperation."

Cooperation on fentanyl is one of the big wins from President Joe Biden's diplomacy with Chinese leader Xi Jinping. According to one senior administration official, China has been "helpful" on curbing the flow of precursor chemicals and they've been abiding by their commitments.

"Trump wants to take credit for that win [on fentanyl cooperation], and he wants to get even more out of Beijing than Biden to show that his approach to diplomacy is superior," Thomas said.

Thomas said given the fact that China is still struggling to revive its economy post-pandemic, it's possible China could take further steps on fentanyl and impose the death penalty on a few major exporters.

Experts say Beijing will likely try to use Elon Musk and other American businesses with operations in China to try to persuade the Trump administration to moderate his policies on China.

In retaliation to the tariffs, Beijing could also revoke some of the preferential treatment that it gives Tesla.

### **US blacklists 29 more Chinese companies over alleged forced labour in Xinjiang**

23 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Robert Delaney

#### **Products of offending firms range from hi-tech inputs such as polysilicon to food products like tomato paste, according to Homeland Security**

The US government put more than two dozen Chinese companies on a blacklist meant to block imports of products made with forced labour, bringing the number of targeted firms to more than 100.

Products made by the 29 companies added to the Department of Homeland Security's Uygur Forced Labour Prevention Act (UFLPA) entity list range from hi-tech inputs, such as polysilicon, to food products like tomato paste, according to the department's announcement on Friday.

The restrictions will take effect on November 25.

The US Congress passed the UFLPA in 2021 to target imports from Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region in western China to prevent the entry of goods made under such conditions.

The law has since seen sanctions imposed on Chinese officials accused of being complicit in labour and human-rights abuses there as well as companies.

About two-thirds of Xinjiang's nearly 26 million people are members of ethnic minorities, including the mostly Muslim Uygur and Kazakh groups.

Accusations of human-rights abuses, mass detention and forced labour in Xinjiang, mainly targeting the Uygur population, have been regularly denied by Beijing.

"Today's enforcement actions make it clear – the United States will not tolerate forced labour in the goods entering our markets," Robert Silvers, US Homeland Security undersecretary for policy, said in Friday's announcement.

"We urge companies to take responsibility, know their supply chains and act ethically."

Asked for comment, the Chinese embassy in Washington called UFLPA a tool for the suppression of China.

"Using falsehoods as a basis, the US has enacted and implemented the UFLPA to impose sanctions on relevant entities and individuals in Xinjiang," said

spokesman Liu Pengyu. "This is another act of the US' suppression of China under the pretext of human rights. It is also a blatant violation of international trade rules that further destabilizes global industrial and supply chains."

The companies named in Friday's announcement included those based in Xinjiang, such as Xinjiang Nonferrous Metals Industry Group, and some in other provinces and municipalities, like Tianjin Tianwei Food Company, which source commodities from the region for their final products.

Xinjiang Daqo New Energy Company, another newly targeted firm, produces high-purity polysilicon materials, which are used in semiconductors and solar panels.

The US government "has reasonable cause to believe, based on specific and articulable information, that Xinjiang Daqo ... sources silicon powder from" Xinjiang, the Homeland Security Department said.

Most of the newly targeted companies are in the agricultural sector, while the others mine and process copper, lithium, beryllium, nickel, manganese and other metals.

The UFLPA allows for a "rebuttable presumption" that any materials produced in Xinjiang are at risk of being tainted with forced labour, creating a "guilty-until-proven-innocent" principle for the products of companies on the law's entity list.

Companies can appeal if they provide "clear and convincing" evidence to customs authorities that their supply chains are free of forced labour.

### **China rebuffs meeting with US defense secretary**

19 November 2024, [CNN](#), Haley Britzky and Oren Liebermann

China rejected a meeting with Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin during a conference in southeast Asia this week, marking the latest turn in a tumultuous relationship between the two countries' defense leaders.

Austin sought to meet with his Chinese counterpart, Dong Jun, at the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting-Plus in Laos as part of a long-standing effort to maintain military lines of communication between the US and the People's Republic of China. But China did not accept the offer, pointing to a recent Taiwan arms sale as their rationale, a senior defense official told reporters traveling with Austin in Laos.

Three weeks ago, the US approved a \$2 billion arms sale to Taiwan, including a first-time provision of advanced surface-to-air missiles to the self-governed island. China immediately criticized the sale, promising to take "resolute countermeasures" to defend its sovereignty.

The Chinese rejection of the meeting in Laos comes just days after US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping met in Peru for their final meeting under Biden's administration. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said the meeting was "candid, constructive, [and] wide ranging," but that Biden would not act as a conduit between the Chinese government and the incoming Trump administration. China has often used the cancellation of meetings and lines of communication as a way of registering displeasure with the United States. After then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in 2022, China cut off a number of lines of communication with the US, including on military issues and climate.

The rejection comes after a seeming improvement in military-to-military communications between the two countries over the last year or so.

### Taiwan, Democracy, Development Are China's 'Red Lines', Xi Tells Biden

16 November 2024, [U.S. News](#)

China's President Xi Jinping told his U.S. counterpart Joe Biden that the issues of Taiwan, democracy, human rights and rights to development are "red lines" for China and not to be challenged, the official state media Xinhua said on Sunday.

Xi warned the United States not to get involved in bilateral disputes over islands and reefs in the South China Sea or "aid or abet the impulsion to make provocations" in that region, it said.

China and United States would roil or even see relations take a setback in rivalry with each other, but could make considerable progress by treating each other as partners and friends, Xi told Biden on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic forum summit in Peru, according to Xinhua.

### During meeting with Biden, China's Xi cautions US to 'make the wise choice' to keep relations stable

16 November 2024, [WCVB](#)

China's leader **Xi Jinping** met for the last time with U.S. President Joe Biden on Saturday but was already looking ahead to President-elect Donald Trump and his "America first" policies, saying Beijing "is ready to work with a new U.S. administration."

During their talks on the sidelines of the annual **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit**, Xi cautioned that a stable China-U.S. relationship was critical not only to the two nations, but also the "future and destiny of humanity."

"Make the wise choice," he cautioned. "Keep exploring the right way for two major countries to get along well with each other."

Without mentioning Trump's name, Xi appeared to signal his concern that the incoming president's protectionist rhetoric on the campaign trail could send the U.S.-China relationship into another valley.

"China is ready to work with a new U.S. administration to maintain communication, expand cooperation and manage differences so as to strive for a steady transition of the China-U.S. relationship for the benefit of the two peoples," Xi said through an interpreter.

Xi, who is firmly entrenched atop China's political hierarchy, spoke forcefully in his brief remarks before reporters. Biden, who is winding down more than 50 years of public service, talked in broader brushstrokes about where the relationship between the two countries has gone. He reflected not just on the past four years but on the decades the two have known each other.

"We haven't always agreed, but our conversations have always been candid and always been frank. We've never kidded one another," Biden said. "These conversations prevent miscalculations, and they ensure the competition between our two countries will not veer into conflict."

Biden was expected to urge Xi to dissuade North Korea from **further deepening its support** for Russia's war on Ukraine. The leaders, with top aides surrounding them, gathered around a long rectangle of tables in an expansive conference room at Lima's Defines Hotel and Conference Center.

China "hosted" the meeting this year, after Xi and Biden met a year ago on the APEC sidelines in Northern California, a gathering hosted by the U.S. They had much to discuss, including China's indirect support for Russia, human rights issues, technology and Taiwan, the self-ruled democracy that Beijing claims as its own.

There's much uncertainty about what lies ahead in the U.S.-China relationship under Trump, who campaigned promising to levy 60% tariffs on Chinese imports.

Already, many American companies, including Nike and eyewear retailer Warby Parker, have been diversifying their sourcing away from China. Shoe brand Steve Madden says it plans to cut imports from China by as much as 45% next year.

In a congratulatory message to Trump after his victory over Vice President Kamala Harris, Xi called for the U.S. and China to manage their differences and get along in a new era. In front of the cameras Saturday, Xi spoke to Biden — but it was unmistakable that his message was directed at Trump.

"In a major flourishing sci-tech revolution, neither decoupling nor supply chain disruption is a solution," Xi said. "Only mutual, beneficial cooperation can lead to common development. 'Small yard, high fence' is not what a major country should pursue."

After he was greeted by Xi, Biden ignored shouted questions from reporters on his concerns about the



incoming Trump administration as well as North Korea. The leaders also did not engage reporters after they made their brief comments at the start of the meeting. Biden administration officials would advise the Trump team that managing the intense competition with Beijing will likely be the most significant foreign policy challenge they will face, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan said.

Biden has viewed his relationship with Xi as among the most consequential on the international stage and put much effort into cultivating it. The two first got to know each other on travels across the U.S. and China when both were vice presidents, interactions that both have said left a lasting impression.

“For over a decade, you and I have spent many hours together, both here and in China and in between,” Biden said. “We’ve spent a long time dealing with these issues.”

But the last four years have presented a steady stream of difficult moments.

The FBI this week offered new details of a federal investigation into Chinese government efforts to hack into U.S. telecommunications networks. The initial findings have revealed a “broad and significant” cyberespionage campaign aimed at stealing information from Americans who work in government and politics.

U.S. intelligence officials also have assessed China has surged sales to Russia of machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that Moscow is using to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry for use in its war against Ukraine.

And tensions flared last year after Biden ordered the shooting down of a Chinese spy balloon that traversed the United States.

Biden is looking for Xi to step up Chinese engagement to prevent an already dangerous moment with North Korea from further escalating.

Biden, South Korean President Yoon Seok Yul and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Friday condemned North Korean leader Kim Jong Un’s decision to send thousands of troops to help Moscow repel Ukrainian forces who have seized territory in Russia’s Kursk border region.

Biden called it “dangerous and destabilizing cooperation.”

White House officials have expressed frustration with Beijing, which accounts for the vast majority of North Korea’s trade, for not doing more to rein in Pyongyang. The North Koreans also have provided Russia with artillery and other munitions, according to U.S. and South Korean intelligence officials. And the U.S., Japan and South Korea have expressed alarm over Pyongyang’s stepped-up cadence of ballistic missile tests.

Kim ordered testing exercises in the lead-up to this month’s U.S. election and is claiming progress on efforts to build capability to strike the U.S. mainland.

Xi and Biden started their day at the leaders’ retreat at the APEC summit, taking part in a photo where they all wore scarves made from vicuña wool, a symbolic animal for Peru. It’s common practice that leaders at these gatherings are given a gift — usually traditional clothing of the host country — that they don for the photo.

### **U.S. companies could be caught in the crosshairs if China retaliates to fight Trump**

15 November 2024, [CNBC](#), Eunice Yoon

With President-elect [Donald Trump](#)’s trade and foreign policy team taking a hawkish stance toward China, U.S. companies are increasingly concerned a hard-line approach could stunt their prospects in the world’s second-largest economy – and turn them into targets of Chinese retaliation.

Trump has threatened to hit China with at least 60% tariffs and vowed to end reliance on the country. That alone would be disruptive. It would force companies to scramble to find other sources of supply, American consumers to pay higher prices at the store, and, according to many experts, lead to job losses.

On top of that, the Chinese government could respond with an expanded tool kit to target American businesses.

“The Trump administration’s actions may be seen or may be interpreted as economic war,” Scott Kennedy, senior advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told reporters in Beijing on Thursday. “If they are interpreted in that way, China might have a much more vigorous response, not limited to tariffs.”

Those actions could range from economic changes to matters of diplomacy and security, Kennedy said, adding China may “push back as hard as they can.”

More combative relations between the U.S. and China also brings the risk of public backlash amid rising Chinese nationalism. The Chinese government has strong controls over information flow which has led to consumer boycotts of international brands.

“The worst part is the consumer brands that are not of a strategic nature and themselves are not controversial and would not be subject to export restrictions might be punished by the local consumer because of their nationality,” said, Michael Hart, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in China. “Since Covid, companies have been looking to diversify and bolster their supply chains, but there are still no easy and reliable replacements for the supply chains and manufacturing that has developed in China over the past decades.”



### **China's retaliation tool kit**

During Trump's first term, the Chinese government retaliated against U.S. tariffs by imposing its own tariffs on U.S. imports.

The U.S.-China Business Council, in conjunction with Oxford Economics, estimates a new tit-for-tat tariff battle could result in a "permanent loss of revenue and pressure businesses to slash jobs and investment plans" with as many as 801,000 net job losses by 2025. The report projected that Nevada, Florida and Arizona would be among the states hardest hit by such tariffs due to their economic reliance on consumer demand. Manufacturing states such as Indiana, Kansas, Michigan and Ohio would also be vulnerable, the Oxford report found. Swing states Nevada, Arizona and Michigan all flipped to Trump in the 2024 election, helping to deliver him back to the White House.

During the last trade battle, China also stopped buying agricultural products from the U.S. The move targeted key U.S. exports like soybeans, disproportionately hurting rural parts of the U.S. where Trump has strong support.

James McGregor, a business consultant on China for three decades, said he sees Beijing using its leverage on U.S. agricultural purchases if it feels pressed this time, too.

"China is already focused on ridding itself of dependence on U.S. farm products. If alternative supplies are available, China may well shift away from American farmers where they can," McGregor said.

Two years ago, China started importing corn from Brazil. The country is now China's biggest supplier of corn, surpassing the U.S.

Beijing could also broaden its retribution methods to include targeting U.S. companies operating on Chinese soil.

The business climate in China has tightened meaningfully since Trump's first term. Despite the Chinese leadership's stated efforts to welcome international companies, AmCham China's 2024 Business Climate Survey Report found 39% of companies polled felt less welcome in China.

### **Tougher laws, tightening regulations**

There's also the risk of legal and regulatory changes in China that could threaten U.S. companies.

In recent years, China made significant revisions to its export control regulations. Those tighter controls have restricted critical metals for the American clean energy and semiconductor sectors.

Analysts foresee China doing the same during a Trump second term, aiming to deprive U.S. industry of key minerals and components.

Beijing has also enhanced laws like an anti-foreign sanctions law that triggers probes, fines and restrictions on operations in the country.

Even before the U.S. election, Beijing had shown signs of targeting certain American companies. For

example, PVH, the owner of Calvin Klein, is under investigation thanks to this law.

China has an upgraded anti-espionage law, which international business groups like AmCham China have criticized for what they say is "ambiguity" in the policy. The law has led to executive and staff detentions and raids on international firms and has made it easier for officials to impose exit bans, barring the accused from leaving the country.

Many worry that the day-to-day regulatory grind to operate in China could become a bigger slog under a heightened retaliatory environment.

Since Trump's first term, Chinese leader Xi Jinping has consolidated power even further.

If Xi signals that U.S. companies are out of favor, they can expect regulations for permits, safety checks, licensing and other approvals to be interpreted more harshly by lower-level officials, experts say.

"We will likely see retaliation against American companies in China where they could be step-by-step squeezed out of the China market and replaced," McGregor said.

### **Biden and Xi will meet in Peru as US-China relations tested again by Trump's return**

14 November 2024, [AP](#), Aamer Madhani

President Joe Biden will hold talks Saturday with China's Xi Jinping on the sidelines of an international summit in Peru, a face-to-face meeting that comes as Beijing braces for Donald Trump's return to the White House.

White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said the meeting will take place while the two leaders are in Lima for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. That will come just over two months before Trump's inauguration.

Sullivan was opaque about how Biden and administration officials will answer expected questions from Xi and his aides about the incoming Trump administration.

"Transitions are uniquely consequential moments in geopolitics. They're a time when competitors and adversaries can see possibly opportunity," Sullivan said. "And so part of what President Biden will communicate is that we need to maintain stability, clarity, predictability through this transition between the United States and China."

During his campaign against Vice President Kamala Harris, Trump promised to slap blanket 60% tariffs on all Chinese exports to the U.S., a move that would jolt the already tumultuous relationship between Beijing and Washington.

Washington and Beijing have long had deep differences on the support China has given to Russia during its war in Ukraine, human rights issues,

technology and Taiwan, the self-ruled democracy that Beijing claims as its own. A second Trump administration is expected to test U.S.-China relations even more than the Republican's first term, when the U.S. imposed tariffs on more than \$360 billion in Chinese products.

That brought Beijing to the negotiating table, and in 2020, the two sides signed a trade deal in which China committed to improve intellectual property rights and buy an extra \$200 billion of American goods. A couple of years later, a research group showed that China had bought essentially none of the goods it had promised. The White House has been working for months to arrange a final meeting between Xi and Biden before the Democrat leaves office in January.

Sullivan traveled to Beijing in late August to meet with his Chinese counterpart and also sat down with Xi. After that, Sullivan indicated that there could be a final meeting between Xi and Biden at APEC or at next week's summit of the Group of 20 top economies in Rio de Janeiro, which both leaders are scheduled to attend.

Biden has sought to maintain a steady relationship with Xi even as his administration repeatedly has raised concerns about what it sees as malign actions by Beijing.

U.S. intelligence officials have assessed China has surged sales to Russia of machine tools, microelectronics and other technology that Moscow is using to produce missiles, tanks, aircraft and other weaponry for use in its war against Ukraine. The administration last month imposed sanctions against two Chinese companies accused of directly helping Russia build long-range attack drones used against Ukraine.

Tensions flared last year after Biden ordered the shooting down of a Chinese spy balloon that traversed the United States. And the Biden administration has criticized Chinese military assertiveness toward Japan, the Philippines and Taiwan.

On the campaign trail, Trump spoke of his personal connection with Xi, which started out well during his first term before becoming strained over disputes about trade and the origins of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a congratulatory message to Trump after his victory over Harris, Xi called for the U.S. and China to manage their differences and get along in a new era, according to Chinese state media.

Biden, for his part, is expected in the meeting with Xi to focus on efforts to stem the flow of Chinese-manufactured chemicals used to make fentanyl, concerns about Beijing's indirect support for Russia's war in Ukraine, cybersecurity concerns and the importance of maintaining military-to-military communications.

Sullivan added that he expected that Biden would also raise an ongoing U.S. investigation into an alleged Chinese hacker operation targeting cellphones used by Trump, Vice President-elect JD Vance, and people associated with the Harris campaign.

Saturday's talks will be the third meeting between Biden and Xi during Biden's presidency. They met in Woodside, California, last November on the sidelines of the 2023 APEC summit, and the leaders last spoke by phone in April.

Sullivan also announced that Biden while at APEC will hold a joint meeting with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japan's new prime minister, Shigeru Ishiba.

That meeting is a follow-up on the historic Camp David summit Biden hosted in August 2023 with Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

Biden has nudged the United States' two closest Asian allies to further tighten security and economic cooperation with each other amid their shared concerns about North Korea's nuclear provocations as well as China's military and economic assertiveness in the Pacific.

The historic rivals have been divided by differing views of World War II history and Japan's colonial rule over the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

### **Investigation into Chinese hacking reveals 'broad and significant' spying effort, FBI says**

14 November 2024, [AP](#)

A federal investigation into Chinese government efforts to hack into U.S. telecommunications networks has revealed a "broad and significant" cyberespionage campaign aimed at stealing information from Americans who work in government and politics, the FBI said Wednesday.

Hackers affiliated with Beijing have compromised the networks of "multiple" telecommunications companies to obtain customer call records and gain access to the private communications of "a limited number of individuals," according to a joint statement issued by the FBI and the federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

The FBI did not identify any of the individuals targeted by the hackers but said most of them "are primarily involved in government or political activity."

The hackers also sought to copy "certain information that was subject to U.S. law enforcement requests pursuant to court orders," the FBI said, suggesting the hackers may have been trying to compromise programs like those subject to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, which grants American spy agencies sweeping powers to surveil the communications of individuals suspected of being agents of a foreign power."

The warning comes after several high-profile hacking incidents that U.S. authorities have linked to China, part of what they say is an effort to steal technological and government information while also targeting vital infrastructure like the electrical grid.

In September, the FBI announced that it had disrupted a vast Chinese hacking operation known as Flax Typhoon that involved the installation of malicious software on more than 200,000 consumer devices, including cameras, video recorders and home and office routers. The devices were then used to create a massive network of infected computers, or botnet, that could then be used to carry out other cyber crimes.

Last month, officials said hackers linked to China targeted the phones of then-presidential candidate Donald Trump and his running mate, Sen. JD Vance, along with people associated with Democratic candidate Vice President Kamala Harris.

Authorities did not disclose how or if the operations announced Wednesday are connected to the earlier campaigns.

In their statement Wednesday, the FBI and CISA said officials are working with the telecommunication industry and hacking victims to shore up defenses against continuing attempts at cyberespionage.

"We expect our understanding of these compromises to grow as the investigation continues," the agencies wrote.

China has rejected accusations from U.S. officials that it engages in cyberespionage directed against Americans. A message left with China's embassy in Washington was not immediately returned Wednesday.

### China Issues Donald Trump a Warning Over Taiwan

11 November 2024, [News Week](#), Billal Rahman

China has warned President-elect Donald Trump to handle issues related to Taiwan "prudently" to avoid "severely damaging" relations between Beijing and Washington.

Beijing, which views Taiwan as a breakaway province, pledged to take "all necessary measures" to uphold its "One China" principle. Under the first Trump administration, Washington and Beijing went toe-to-toe on trade, tariffs and tech.

In response to a question about Trump and Taiwan, Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in the U.S., told *Newsweek*: "The Taiwan question is the most important and most sensitive issue in China-U.S. relations.

"The U.S. government needs to earnestly abide by the One China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués and prudently handle Taiwan-related

issues so as to avoid severe damage to China-U.S. relations and cross-Strait peace and stability."

*Newsweek* has contacted the Trump campaign for comment via email.

This comes after the U.S. announced it will be providing Taiwan with a surface-to-air missile defense system as part of a \$2 billion arms package in response to escalating tensions with China.

The arms package, which was approved in October, includes three National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems and related equipment valued at up to \$1.16 billion, according to the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. It also features radar systems estimated to be worth \$828 million.

In response, the Chinese Embassy said: "The sales seriously undermine China's sovereignty and security interests, harm China-U.S. relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, and send a gravely wrong message to 'Taiwan independence' separatist forces. China strongly condemns and firmly opposes this and has lodged serious protests with the U.S."

The U.S., Taiwan's closest ally, maintains strong ties with the island, which is crucial to Western foreign policy and influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

U.S. relations with China and Taiwan are complex, and the "One China" policy, established in the 1970s, is central to this relationship. Under this, the U.S. acknowledges Beijing's stance that there is only one China, including Taiwan, while not explicitly endorsing China's sovereignty over Taiwan. This ambiguous stance allows the U.S. to maintain unofficial relations with Taiwan, supporting it in various ways without officially recognizing it as an independent state.

Meanwhile, Beijing cautioned Trump that raising tariffs on Chinese goods could harm the American economy.

During his campaign, Trump pledged to impose 60 percent tariffs on all Chinese exports, a move that would significantly impact China's economy. Tariffs are central to Trump's "America First" economic strategy, designed to protect U.S. industries and stimulate domestic growth.

Dean of the School of Business and Management at Notre Dame de Namur University John M. Veitch told *Newsweek*, "there will be significant losses to the economy" if a trade war is reignited.

"China is not in a particularly strong economic situation right now. They have seen weakening in important sectors like construction and real estate," he said. "Their central bank has recently implemented new monetary policies and tools to try to stimulate capital markets and the economy broadly.

"Trade wars always have very asymmetric impacts on an economy—overall consumers will lose as they pay higher prices for imported goods and likely higher prices for U.S. goods whose prices were previously held in check by possible imports. This will be a large

loss to the economy as a whole and probably a loss that consumers themselves will feel, especially given U.S. consumer sensitivity to past inflation."

In response to Trump's comments suggesting he would impose "massive tariffs" on China if it "went into Taiwan" and that Taiwan might have to pay for U.S. protection, a spokesperson for China's Taiwan Affairs Office said the people of Taiwan had a clear understanding of U.S. policy.

"Whether the United States is trying to protect or harm Taiwan, I believe most of our Taiwan compatriots have already made a rational judgment and know very clearly that what the United States pursues is always America first," Zhu Fenglian told a regular news briefing.

"Taiwan at any time may turn from a pawn to a discarded child," Fenglian said, without referring to Trump by name.

### **Chinese State Media Mocks US Election as 'Battle of Five Presidents' While Analysts Warn of Propaganda Motives**

07 November 2024, [China Scope](#)

On the eve of the US presidential election, China's state television CCTV posted a topic on Weibo about "Five US Presidents in a Chaos Battle," which quickly became a trending topic. Chinese netizens reacted to the post with mockery and criticism of the US electoral system by Chinese netizens. The five presidents mentioned in the post were Donald Trump, Joe Biden, Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter, all of whom were politically active during this last election cycle.

CCTV's post described President Biden as "out," Trump as "nearly physically eliminated due to assassination attempts," and claimed former presidents Obama, Clinton, and Carter were "interfering" (in the election cycle), turning the election into a "battle of five kings." The post garnered 150 million views and sparked extensive discussion.

Chinese social media users criticized the US election process, with some describing it as lacking civility and democratic atmosphere, comparing it to a marketplace quarrel or gang fight. The topic "#USElection" attracted nearly 15.3 billion views on Weibo.

Analysts note that this coverage is part of China's internal propaganda strategy to shape public opinion against the US democratic system. An anonymous source from Chongqing stated that Chinese state media regularly crafts anti-US narratives to control public opinion while avoiding any mention of internal political conflicts within the CCP.

Dr. Du Shengcong, a media expert from Taiwan's Ming Chuan University, describes the Weibo post as

"gaseous language" – low-brow statements meant to reach mass audiences. He said that "state media should be more responsible in their reporting" to avoid misinterpretation. He noted, despite pre-election chaos, US democratic institutions continue to function normally after elections."

### **China urges U.S. cooperation as Trump trade threat looms**

07 November 2024, [CNBC](#), Evelyn Cheng

China emphasized the need for greater cooperation with the U.S., a day after it became clear President-elect Donald Trump would become the next leader of the White House.

"The Chinese side is willing, on the basis of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, to increase communication with the U.S., expand cooperation and resolve differences," He Yongqian, spokesperson at China's Ministry of Commerce, told reporters Thursday in Mandarin, according to a CNBC translation.

She was responding to a question about China's views and planned countermeasures, given the potential for increased U.S. tariffs and restrictions on high-end tech. "Together [we can] push China-U.S. economic and trade relations toward a stable, healthy and sustainable direction, for the benefit of both countries and the world," the commerce spokesperson said.

Her comments echoed those of Chinese President Xi Jinping, who earlier in the day noted the benefits of bilateral cooperation in a congratulatory message to Trump, according to a Ministry of Foreign Affairs readout.

Washington turned tougher on Beijing under Trump's first four-year term that began in 2017. This year, the president-elect threatened additional tariffs on Chinese goods while campaigning for his second mandate.

Yue Su, principal economist at the Economist Intelligence Unit, said Trump will likely impose such tariffs in the first half of next year. She added that the White House leader could speed up the process by invoking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act or Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows the president to impose tariffs of up to 15% in response to a serious balance-of-payments deficit.

Other analysts are less concerned about a significant increase in U.S. tariffs targeting China.

"Trump's current tariff proposal is likely the worst-case scenario," David Chao, Global Market Strategist, Asia Pacific (excluding Japan) at Invesco, said in a note Thursday. "I suspect the new administration will hold off imposing these tariffs in order to win concessions,

whether that may be more purchases of American soybeans or even geopolitical ones.”

He added, “More so, I don’t think Trump’s proposed 60% tariff policy on China will significantly impact [multinational corporations’] confidence or sentiment.”

Chao nevertheless said that a potential 10% tariff on all exports to the U.S. would likely have a bigger impact, weakening global demand and hitting China and the rest of Asia.



## SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

### Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz set to visit China next month at special invitation

30 November 2024, [Dunya News](#)



Maryam Nawaz Sharif is set to become the first woman chief minister of Punjab to visit China at a special invitation for next month, December.

The chief minister has formally received invitation from the ruling Communist Party of China. She has been invited for an official visit from Dec 8 to 15.

She will be flanked by a delegation during the eight-day trip when she will visit major cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong.

The invitation expresses a desire to enhance mutual cooperation between China's ruling party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

It also emphasises the promotion of deep mutual ties and friendship between the neighbouring countries.

During the visit, collaboration on matters related to information technology, healthcare, industry, smog, and climate change will be reviewed.

There will also be discussions on business and trade relations between the private sectors of Punjab and China.

During the visit, Maryam Nawaz Sharif will be briefed on China's development model, governance system, and the promotion of bilateral cooperation.

The Punjab CM will also meet prominent Chinese leaders and key government officials during the visit.

### Patrolling Agreement with China Implemented: MEA tells Lok Sabha

30 November 2024, [The Wire](#)

*From April-May 2020, Indian and Chinese troops had been at a stand-off at multiple points of the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh.*

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) informed parliament on Friday (November 29) that the patrolling arrangement agreement with China, reached a month ago for Depsang and Demchok, has been "implemented," while the terms of disengagement at earlier friction points in Eastern Ladakh border stand-off remain unchanged.

From April-May 2020, Indian and Chinese troops had been at a stand-off at multiple points of the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, sparking several clashes including a hand-to-hand fight in June that claimed the lives of at least 20 Indian soldiers and four Chinese soldiers.

Following multiple rounds of diplomatic and military negotiations, disengagement was achieved at around four friction points, resulting in the establishment of 'buffer zones'.

However, progress on resolving the two remaining points at Depsang and Demchok had remained elusive, till last month.

On October 21, India first announced that a "patrolling agreement" had been finalised for these two last friction points. Two days later, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping held their first formal talks in five years in Kazan, Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

Since then, the foreign and defence ministers of both countries have met twice in separate engagements to advance the process of normalising ties.

Earlier on November 2, India had said that "verification patrolling" had commenced in Depsang and Demchok. The Chinese defence ministry said on Thursday (November 28) that the "Chinese and Indian militaries are implementing the solutions reached by the two sides on border-related issues, and progress is going smoothly".

In a written answer in Lok Sabha on Friday, Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh said for the first time on Friday that the October 21 agreement has been "effected and implemented" on the ground. "India and China reached agreement on patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control in India-China border areas in Depsang and Demchok on 21 October 2024, leading to disengagement. It has been agreed therein that patrolling activities and, wherever applicable, grazing will resume as per longstanding practice before friction started in these areas. The agreement has since been effected and implemented as per modalities and timelines agreed," Singh said.

The statement also clarifies that the conditions set for the resolution of earlier friction points, which included the establishment of buffer zones, remain intact.

"The terms of the agreements reached before October 21, 2024, continue to apply in the relevant areas of Eastern Ladakh," Singh added.

At the earlier friction points, both sides had reportedly agreed to withdraw an equal distance from the area and suspend patrolling until overall de-escalation and troop withdrawal were completed.

## China, India find common ground for 'strategic recalibration' in post-clash thaw

29 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Cyril Ip

### De-escalation of border tensions has paved the way for engagement on other issues, including pressures from the West, analysts said

The thaw in China-India relations began with a pact to disengage troops at their disputed border in the Himalayas, laying the groundwork for a reunion between President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Brics summit in October.

Advertisement

Last week, the two countries' defence chiefs held talks in Laos and committed to cooperation – the latest in a series of moves that analysts have called a "strategic recalibration" in response to pressures from the West. As Beijing seeks to reform the global economic architecture and New Delhi pursues its multidimensional foreign policy, their visions have proven more complimentary than conflicting since a bloody border clash in June 2020 plunged ties to historic lows.

Numerous rounds of negotiations have taken place in the past four years, but it took October's accord on military disengagement to restore both countries' troop positions to pre-crisis locations in the border region of Ladakh.

According to Chietigj Bajpae, a senior research fellow for South Asia in the Asia-Pacific Programme at Chatham House, the agreement followed "a recognition by New Delhi that it had backed itself into a corner after the clashes".

"De-escalation of border tensions [was] a prerequisite to engagement on other issues, including the economy," said Bajpae, author of *China in India's Post-Cold War Engagement with Southeast Asia*.

Bajpae said "economic and strategic compulsions" faced by the Asian giants played a role in their reconciliation, including a potentially volatile relationship with the US from next year when president-elect Donald Trump begins his second term. Tightening foreign investment restrictions in Western countries had also prompted China to seek stable relations and deeper engagement with the Global South, of which India is a key member, he said.

"India's tensions with the West, on issues ranging from relations with Russia to Canada, also reaffirmed the need for New Delhi to maintain a multidimensional foreign policy."

Will India and China's new border deal lead to long-term peace in the disputed Himalayas?

Veteran journalist Kalinga Seneviratne, who lectures at the Shinawatra University in Bangkok, said New Delhi was vexed by Washington's "concerted pressure" to halt India's long-standing trade with Russia after the invasion of Ukraine.

There had also been a perception in India that the US had quietly supported Canada over its recent frictions with India, sparked by the killing of a prominent Sikh activist in June, he said.

Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen who advocated for an independent Khalistan, was shot outside a temple in Surrey, British Columbia. India has strongly denied involvement in his death and recently accused Canada of sheltering violent extremists.

“The spat with Canada over its alleged harbouring of Sikh ‘terrorists’ and accusation of Indian diplomats being involved in the murder of a Sikh community leader in Canada has spurred some anti-Western sentiment in India, especially in the media.”

According to Seneviratne, despite attempts by Beijing and New Delhi to improve relations, some efforts have been slowed by “strong sentiments among Indians that the Chinese cannot be trusted”.

Seneviratne noted that when asked by Western journalists about the Chinese “threat”, Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar had repeatedly referred to the two countries’ shared history.

“For the past two years or so, [Jaishankar] has kept on pointing to the two countries being ancient civilisations that have lived peacefully next to each other for 5,000 years,” he said.

Seneviratne, author of *Geopolitics and the Media in Asia and the Pacific: Pulling in Different Directions*, said that widely circulated Western media in India “played a big role in fomenting Sinophobia”.

“But Indians are not fools, they can clearly see the plot,” he said.

According to Seneviratne, when it comes to reforming global architecture, “India and China, along with Russia and Brazil, are on the same wavelength”.

He added that India’s business sector pushed New Delhi to mend fences with Beijing by lifting trade restrictions imposed after the 2020 dispute.

Bajpae said there was growing recognition by India that it could not meet its ambitions to emerge as a global manufacturing hub without sourcing components and raw materials from China.

“Indian corporations have been lobbying to relax visa rules and investment restrictions [and] Indian companies are also seeking ways to help Chinese companies enter the Indian market, although investment restrictions will remain in place for politically sensitive sectors,” he said.

In Seneviratne’s view, Beijing also wants India to play a more active role in the Brics grouping of developing economies and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to avoid its mission of “reforming the global economic architecture” being spoiled.

“For Brics to succeed, India and China need to cooperate. Both countries see themselves as leaders

or spokespeople of the Global South – if they can do it together, that will be a formidable alliance,” he said.

Colombo-based journalist and researcher Rathindra Kuruwita said there had been signs in recent years that the containment policies imposed on China by the West might be applied to India as its economic prowess grew – hence the “strategic recalibration” by both countries.

“The evolving global order, characterised by shifting alliances and emerging blocs like Brics, has underscored the importance of collaboration between India and China. Both countries aim to assert their influence in multilateral forums, making improved bilateral ties strategically advantageous.”

According to Kuruwita, progress in China-India relations can be expected in the resumption of direct flights and other areas of people-to-people exchanges, as emphasised by Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister.

“Simplification of visa processes is likely, aiming to boost tourism, business travel, and academic exchanges. Both sides have also discussed improving cooperation in media by enabling the exchange of journalists, fostering better mutual understanding,” Kuruwita said.

Seneviratne noted that Beijing and New Delhi had been “very strict” over granting visas for academic exchanges between the two countries.

“There needs to be more interaction between them ... Visa liberalisation may help,” he said, adding that opportunities for student exchanges should be increased.

### **Armies making great progress in implementing settlement: China**

29 November 2024, [The Hindu](#), Dinakar Peri

### **“We also look forward to harmonious dance between the Chinese dragon and Indian Elephant with concerted steps,” says Chinese Defence Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian**

Stating that the Armies of India and China are implementing the settlement reached between the two countries for disengagement and resumption of patrolling at Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, the Chinese Defence Ministry said on Thursday (November 28, 2024) that they were making “great progress.”

Sources in the know said the frequency of patrolling would be a maximum of one patrol a week by each side in Depsang and Demchok. Talks are continuing between the two sides for resumption of patrolling in other five friction points where buffer zones are in place following disengagement.

Last week, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun in Laos on the

sidelines of the 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus. The meeting came in the backdrop of the disengagement and the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

during a press conference in Beijing on November 28, 2024. | Photo Credit: AP

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Implementation of agreement with India to disengage troops going 'smoothly': Chinese Foreign Ministry



Last week, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart Admiral Dong Jun in Laos on the sidelines of the 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus. The meeting came in the backdrop of the disengagement and the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

#### **'Positive meeting'**

On the meeting between the two leaders, he said they had a "positive and constructive" meeting and agreed to implement the important consensus reached between the top leaders and promote stable relations between the two countries. "Now, we are making great progress," Sr Col Wu said.

During the meeting, Mr. Singh called for reflecting on the lessons learnt from the unfortunate border clashes of 2020, "take measures to prevent recurrence of such events and safeguard peace and tranquillity along the India-China border" and both sides agreed to work together towards a road map for rebuilding mutual trust and understanding.

The spokesperson said the two militaries should strictly abide by the recent common understandings reached by the two sides to de-escalate tensions at the border areas, make efforts to bring down the tensions and focus on enhancing mutual trust and exchanges between the two countries. "We hope the two sides can seize the opportunity and build new momentum to make new progress in the military-to-military relations," he added.

The two sides have since completed disengagement from Depsang and Demchok, the last two remaining friction points of the 2020 stand-off, and have resumed coordinated patrolling. On November 4, the Indian Army announced that it had patrolled one of the five patrolling points in Depsang, PP 10 and shortly after the Chinese People's Liberation Army too resumed patrolling.

#### **China looks forward to harmonious dance between the Chinese dragon and Indian elephant with concerted steps: defense spokesperson**

28 November 2024, [Global Times](#)

A Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson on Thursday expressed hope for China and India to seize the opportunity and the good momentum of the two countries' defense minister's recent positive and constructive meeting to make new progress in the military-to-military relationship.

Spokesperson Wu Qian made the remarks at a regular press conference on Thursday, when asked to comment about information on the website of the Indian Defense Ministry on November 20. Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh stated recently during his meeting with Chinese Defense Minister Admiral Dong Jun in Vientiane, Laos, that a friendly relationship between India and China, the two most populous countries, will have a positive impact on global peace and prosperity, and the two countries should focus on cooperation rather than conflict. Wu said that Dong met with his Indian counterpart in Vientiane, Laos, on the afternoon of November 20, and the meeting was positive and constructive. The two sides agreed to deliver on the important consensus reached by the two state leaders and promote a stable development of the mil-to-mil relationship; to strictly abide by the recent common understanding reached by the two sides and make efforts to deescalate tensions in the border areas; to focus on enhancing mutual trust and conduct more exchanges and interactions between the two militaries, Wu noted.

"We hope our two sides can seize the opportunity and the good momentum to make new progress in the mil-to-mil relationship. We also look forward to a

harmonious dance between the Chinese dragon and the Indian elephant with concerted steps," Wu said.

### **Centre Approves ₹ 28,229 Crore For 1,637 Km Arunachal Frontier Highway Along LAC**

28 November 2024, [NDTV](#)

The ambitious project to be built at an estimated cost of ₹ 40,000 crore is seen as a move to counter China's aggression in Arunachal Pradesh, besides contributing to the socio-economic development of the border state.

The Centre has sanctioned ₹ 28,229 crore for constructing the 1,637 km Arunachal Frontier Highway connecting 12 districts of the state along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on the India-China international border, a top official said.

The ambitious project to be built at an estimated cost of ₹ 40,000 crore is seen as a move to counter China's aggression in Arunachal Pradesh, besides contributing to the socio-economic development of the border state.

The highway is being constructed along the 'India-Tibet-China-Myanmar' border and the road project will be as close as 20 km from the LAC and international borders.

It will start from Bomdila and pass through Nafra, Huri and Monigong towns, which are closer to the LAC or the McMahon Line, and conclude in Vijaynagar near the India-Myanmar border.

"The Centre has sanctioned ₹ 28,229 crore for the Arunachal Frontier Highway, which will connect 1,683 villages. The national highway being built parallel to the MacMohan Line will be completed by 2027," Chief Engineer of Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and head of Project Brahmanak, Subhash Chandra Lunia, said.

He said work is under progress for constructing the 198 km stretch (Tato-Tuting) of the Arunachal Frontier National Highway-913.

After 2014, the budget for BRO's work in various states has been doubled for road development and maintenance as compared to the previous years, the official said.

Stating that work is underway on projects under the Brahmanak Project in Arunachal Pradesh, Lunia said construction and maintenance of road infrastructure is being done in Siang, Upper Siang, West Siang and Shi-Yomi districts along with maintenance of four roads in Assam's Dhemaji district.

In 2022-23 and 2023-24, the Brahmanak Project constructed a 100-metre span arch bridge on Siom River on Along-Yingkiang road. The construction of Siom bridge was completed in a record time of 180 days and opened for traffic, he said.

Lunia also said that from the day of establishment of the Brahmanak Project till today, construction of 17

roads has been completed, whose total length is 496 km.

Along with this, the construction of 42 permanent bridges and 11 modular bridges has also been completed.

The official also said the BRO has always been at the forefront of construction of roads/bridges in favourable and unfavourable weather conditions for the last many years in the state.

Under Brahmanak Project, BRO is committed to provide all-weather connectivity to the soldiers as well as the public.

### **China outpaces India in nuclear aircraft carrier race with new breakthrough**

25 November 2024, [Business Standard](#)

*Reports of a prototype reactor in Sichuan shed light on Beijing's long-term ambitions to expand its naval power*

China appears to be advancing its plans for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, a *South China Morning Post* report from Sunday indicated, citing reports of a prototype nuclear reactor sparking renewed attention on Beijing's aspirations to project naval power globally.

Unlike conventional carriers, nuclear-powered ones can operate for extended periods without refuelling, providing them with greater range and the capacity to carry more fuel and weapons for their aircraft.

#### **What do we know about China's prototype nuclear reactor?**

On November 11, the *Associated Press* reported that a prototype reactor for a large surface warship had been constructed at a mountain site near Leshan in Sichuan province. Research, conducted by the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California and provided to the news agency, suggested that China's 701 Institute, which oversees aircraft carrier development, had acquired reactor equipment "intended for installation on a large surface warship". This conclusion was drawn from publicly accessible documents, including an environmental impact report identifying the project as "national defence-related", and satellite imagery captured between 2020 and 2023 that showed the development of reactor-related facilities.

Currently, the United States (US) operates 11 nuclear-powered carriers, while France has one, the Charles de Gaulle.

China's ambitions for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier have long been speculated upon, with many seeing it as a critical step towards equipping the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy with blue-water capabilities. The *Associated Press* report may be the clearest indication yet that Beijing is pursuing this goal.



### **What about India's aircraft carrier plans?**

This comes as India continues to counter Beijing's growing military presence in the Indian Ocean, a concern expected to persist despite the recent thaw in relations following the October Line of Actual Control (LAC) patrolling agreement.

In May, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh announced that India would soon begin constructing its third aircraft carrier. Singh made these remarks in reference to the pending Indian Navy proposal to construct another indigenous aircraft carrier of the same size as the INS Vikrant, which weighs 45,000 tonnes and was commissioned in September 2022.

Currently, the Indian Navy operates two 45,000-tonne aircraft carriers: the INS Vikramaditya and the INS Vikrant. Both are conventionally powered and utilise ski-jump ramps to assist with aircraft take-offs. The INS Vikrant, India's first indigenous carrier, was constructed by Cochin Shipyard Ltd, while the INS Vikramaditya was acquired from Russia and has been operational since 2014.

These carriers can each accommodate 25-30 fixed-wing aircraft along with 10 helicopters. Given that the proposed third aircraft carrier will match the size of the INS Vikrant, it is expected to have a similar air wing capacity.

India had earlier considered building a 65,000-tonne third carrier, the Indigenous Aircraft Carrier-2 (IAC-2), with a projected air wing of 54 fighters. Discussions had also included the possibility of equipping the ship with nuclear propulsion and electromagnetic catapults.

However, the current plans strongly suggest that India's third carrier will be conventionally powered.

### **What are the capabilities of nuclear-powered carriers?**

If realised, a nuclear-powered carrier would enable the PLA Navy to carry out "smooth deepwater aircraft operations", Yoon Suk-joon, a senior fellow at the Korea Institute for Military Affairs and an expert on Chinese naval systems, told the *South China Morning Post*.

Yoon noted that nuclear propulsion not only allows sufficient operating speed unaffected by sea conditions and ample power supply, but also ensures the safety of aircraft take-off and landing systems. This, he added, would provide the Chinese navy with the confidence to keep its carriers operational in open seas.

He explained that nuclear power could enable speeds of up to 30 knots, or 55 kilometres per hour (km/h), enhancing the efficiency of advanced aircraft launch systems.

Collin Koh, a senior fellow at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, reportedly highlighted the potential for such carriers to undertake "global voyages" without frequent refuelling. "We are

not just looking at the Chinese operating the carrier just within the region," Koh observed.

He speculated that such a reactor would likely be intended exclusively for use on carriers, emphasising the "long-term Chinese ambition" it represents. While such vessels could play a critical role in flashpoints like the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait, Koh noted their likely deployment on a broader scale, starting with the Indian Ocean.

He also pointed out that China's first overseas military base in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa is large enough to host an aircraft carrier.

### **What do we know about China's rapid naval modernisation?**

The PLA Navy, already the largest in the world, aims to operate six carriers by 2035 as part of its aggressive modernisation drive. Its newest and third carrier, the Fujian, is undergoing sea trials and is the first non-US carrier to feature an advanced electromagnetic catapult launch system, which allows for higher-frequency aircraft launches.

According to Koh, China's carrier programme is evolving rapidly, with the Fujian's successor – referred to as the Type 004 – expected to be of a similar or larger size. Should the reactor project prove successful, future Chinese carriers "will all be nuclear-powered", he reportedly added.

In March, Yuan Huazhi, political commissar for the PLA Navy, confirmed that work on a fourth carrier was in progress, with an announcement on whether it would feature nuclear propulsion expected "soon".

### **What are the strategic implications?**

Alex Bristow, senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, told the *South China Morning Post* that nuclear-powered carriers would solidify the PLA Navy's status as a "first-tier" rival to the US Navy. While noting that an aircraft carrier's chances of survival in a major US-China conflict were "debatable", Bristow said that they could still play an important role in other scenarios, enabling Beijing to signal strength and exert force, particularly against weaker adversaries.

### **Resumption of Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage discussed during recent India-China foreign ministers' meeting**

20 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

While China said it discussed the resumption of direct flights, exchange of journalists, and facilitation of visa issuance process during its foreign minister Wang Yi's meeting with Indian External Affairs Minister EAM S Jaishankar on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Brazil's Rio de Janeiro on Nov 19, India says it also discussed steps to resume the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage.

A press release issued by the Indian foreign ministry said the two sides discussed steps to resume the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage.

Mansarovar is a freshwater lake in eastern Tibet near Mount Kailash, and both are places of pilgrimage attracting Hindu and other devotees from India and neighbouring countries.

“Among the steps discussed were the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra pilgrimage, data sharing on trans-border rivers, direct flights between India and China, and media exchanges,” the press release read.

The two leaders also discussed maintaining peace and tranquillity at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), following a recent thaw in ties after PM Narendra Modi and Chinese leader Xi Jinping met in Russia’s Kazan on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit, reported the *wionews.com* Nov 19.

“The Ministers recognized that the disengagement in our border areas had contributed to the maintenance of peace and tranquillity. The discussions focused on the next steps in India-China relations. It was agreed that a meeting of the Special Representatives and of the Foreign Secretary-Vice Minister mechanism will take place soon,” the press release said.

Stating India’s position on global and regional issues, the Indian foreign ministry also said, “EAM said that we are strongly committed to a multipolar world, including a multipolar Asia. Where India is concerned, its foreign policy has been principled and consistent, marked by independent thought and action. We are against unilateral approaches to establish dominance. India does not view its relationships through the prism of other nations.”

The Kailash-Mansarovar pilgrimage stopped in 2020 after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The year also saw Sino-India relation plummet after the Galwan Valley clash in eastern Ladakh. As a result, the officially organized pilgrimage never resumed, with Indians wishing to take privately arranged pilgrimage through Nepal also being effectively prevented by China.

### **Need to focus on cooperation, not conflict: Rajnath tells Chinese minister**

20 November 2024, [Business Standard](#)

#### *Emphasises confidence building between India and China through de-escalation*

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Chinese counterpart, Admiral Dong Jun, in Vientiane, Lao Peoples’ on Wednesday – i.e. November 20 – on the sidelines of 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting-Plus that begins on Thursday.

This was the first meeting between the two defence ministers following the recent disengagement agreements. It is also the first meeting since Prime

Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit.

Rajnath Singh also met his Malaysian counterpart Dato Seri Mohamed Khaled Bin Nordin and the Defence Minister of Laos, General Chansamone Chanyalath in Vientiane on Wednesday, on the sidelines of 11th ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) Plus.

ADMM-Plus is a regional security platform for the ten ASEAN member states: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. In addition there are eight dialogue partners (India, US, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand) to strengthen security and defence cooperation.

Rajnath said that amicable relations between India and China, the two largest nations in the world, would have positive implications for global peace and prosperity. Considering that both countries are neighbours, Rajnath mentioned that “we need to focus on cooperation rather than conflict”.

Rajnath called for learning lessons from the Sino-Indian border clashes of 2020, safeguarding peace and tranquillity, and preventing the recurrence of such incidents along the India-China border.

The Indian defence minister said he looked forward to greater trust and confidence building between the two sides through de-escalation. Both sides agreed to draw up a roadmap for rebuilding mutual trust and understanding.

Earlier in the day, the Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh arrived at Vientiane on a three-day visit. He will attend the 11th ADMM-Plus meeting on Thursday and address the forum on regional and international security issues.

Rajnath Singh said that amicable India-China relations would be good for global peace and prosperity. He said there was a need to focus on cooperation rather than conflict.

### **China's foreign minister meets Indian counterpart, calls for resumption of direct flights**

19 November 2024, [Reuters](#)

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi met his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar on Monday in Rio de Janeiro, a statement from his ministry said on Tuesday, during which he called for the resumption of direct flights between the two countries.

Wang also talked of the need for "more mutual trust and less suspicion," between the regional rivals, the statement added. The countries last month began implementing an agreement to end a military standoff on each side of the disputed Himalayan border.

Wang also urged the Indian side to step up cooperation on exchanging journalists and facilitating visas.

## EAM Jaishankar Emphasizes De-escalation as Next Step in Sino-Indian Relations After Disengagement

16 November 2024, [Republic World](#)

Jaishankar says disengagement with China along the LAC is complete, with de-escalation as the next step, but cautions against expecting a reset in ties.

The disengagement part of the "problem" with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh has been put at rest and the focus should now be on de-escalation, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday.

### Disengagement and Its Implications

Jaishankar said it is "reasonable" to expect some improvement in the relations between India and China following the final round of disengagement but hesitated to say that there could be a reset of the ties. "I see disengagement as disengagement; nothing more, nothing less. If you look at our current situation with China, we have an issue where our troops are uncomfortably close along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) which required us to disengage," he said at the HT Leadership Summit.

The understanding between India and China on October 21 was the last of the disengagement agreements, Jaishankar said.

"So that with its implementation, the disengagement part of the problem is at rest," he said.

### India-China Ties: No Reset Yet

Jaishankar's remarks came in response to a question on whether the disengagement of troops by the two sides last month was the beginning of a reset of the Sino-Indian ties.

The external affairs minister said the current situation of the relationship does not warrant such a conclusion. Indian and Chinese militaries completed the disengagement exercise in Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh along the LAC last month after the two sides reached an agreement to resolve the festering border row.

The two sides also resumed patrolling activities in the two areas after a gap of almost four-and-a-half years.

### Next Step: De-escalation

In his remarks, Jaishankar said de-escalation should be the next step following the completion of the disengagement process.

"Where the disengagement will lead us, it is a reasonable supposition that there will be some improvement in the ties," he said.

### Differing Views on China within the Government

On the overall India-China ties, Jaishankar delved into various factors and said it is a "complicated" relationship.

To another question on whether the economic and security wings of the government have divergent views on China as this year's Economic Survey appeared to pitch for greater economic engagement

with the neighbouring country, Jaishankar said there could be different points of view but overall relationship is guided by a policy decision.

"I think an accurate way of looking at it is that in every government, different ministries have different responsibilities, and flowing from that responsibility, they have a point of view," he said.

"You referred to an Economic Survey. In effect, there would be a national security survey which you may not see in public, which would have a national security point of view," he said.

Jaishankar said the external affairs ministry is an integrator of all points of views and takes an overall balanced approach.

"If somebody has a point of view, then we look at that point of view. We don't say you can't have that point of view, but a point of view at the end of the day is not a policy decision," he said.

### India's Political Stability and Global Impact

To a separate question, the external affairs minister said the world is looking at India's political stability, especially at a time when most countries in the world are facing political instability.

"At such a time, being elected three times in a row in a democracy is not an ordinary thing," he said about the result of the parliamentary election this year.

### US Election and Global Engagement

On Republican leader Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election, Jaishankar said it reflected a lot about the US.

"This US election tells us a lot about America. It tells us that many of the concerns and priorities that won Donald Trump a first term have become more intense, not gone away," he said.

The external affairs minister also said he does not think that the US would turn its back on the world.

"If you are the number one power, you have to remain engaged with the world, but the terms you are offering to the world are going to be different from the terms which were there," he said.

### Ambitious India-US Partnerships

The external affairs minister said ambitious projects like the India-US initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET) are unlikely to be impacted under the new government in Washington.

"I think we are going to see that as a structural trend and, my own sense is, if President Trump is determined to make America more competitive and brings to it a strong element of business viability, I think such an America will actually look for partners with whom it can work in a complementary fashion," he said.

### India's Role in Russia-Ukraine Conflict

On the Russia-Ukraine conflict and India's efforts to find a peaceful solution to it, Jaishankar said a solution cannot be found on the battlefield.

"What we have been trying to do is to have conversations, in good faith, with the understanding that common points or convergences in those conversations, if the other party was comfortable, we were prepared to share it with the other side," he said. "We have not put forward a peace plan. We do not think it is our business to do that. Our business is to try to find a way of bringing these two countries to a point where they are able to engage, because, at the end of the day, they have to engage with each other," he said.

### **China accused of trying to stifle India's growth with export restrictions**

16 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

While the Oct 21 deal on eastern Ladakh disengagement and patrolling with China was hailed by some in India as a "breakthrough", the two countries still have a lot of ground to cover before normalizing their overall bilateral ties, as is evident in their ongoing trade frictions.

In its latest attempt to curb India's industrial growth, China has imposed export restrictions on essential minerals and machinery, ranging from gallium and germanium, critical for solar power and semiconductors, to tunnel-boring machines (TBMs) used in infrastructure projects like metro construction, reported [swarajyamag.com](#) Nov 15.

In Aug 2023, China imposed tight controls on the export of gallium and germanium to countries including India, the US, and Japan. These minerals are vital for India's rapidly growing renewable energy sector, especially in the production of solar cells and modules.

China, the world's largest supplier, has now cut off access to these crucial resources, jeopardizing India's ability to meet its solar power production targets, the report said.

India currently circumvents China's ban by rerouting the shipment of these supplies through Dubai's Jebel Ali port. Dubai-based traders or companies lease or import machinery from China, then re-export them to India, the report said.

However, the rerouting process has inflated project costs by as much as 10%. Besides, what was once a 15-day shipping cycle is now stretching to three months, causing significant delays. Furthermore, additional costs arise due to logistics, warehousing, and financing, all of which strain the already tight budgets for strategic infrastructure projects in India, the report noted.

Apart from other costs as well arising from the payment system and so forth, spare parts, often sourced through third-party intermediaries, add to the financial burden.

Besides, experts caution that the current workaround is unsustainable in the long term. Relying on Dubai as a middleman is a temporary fix to China's economic bullying, the report said.

Experts argue that India must focus on building domestic manufacturing capabilities for these vital components. Only then can India fully decouple its reliance on foreign suppliers, especially when China's restrictions may continue to disrupt supply chains in the future, the report said.

During a Delhi Metro ride late last month, India's Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal informed visiting German Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck that New Delhi may halt the purchase of German-made tunnel boring machines if issues such as China blocking sales continued. This conversation, shared in a video that went viral on social media platform X, underscoring India's concerns over critical infrastructure supplies.

Goyal explained that India currently buys tunnel boring machines from Herrenknecht, a German company. However, recent complications had arisen as China, a key production base for Herrenknecht, had obstructed the sale of these machines to India, noted [newsx.com](#) Oct 28.

India, on its part, was recently reported to have stopped importing manufactures from Nepal, and possibly other countries, if they included Chinese components.

### **Rajnath Singh, Chinese counterpart likely to meet for 1st time after border truce**

14 November 2024, [India Today](#)

India China Relations: The meeting comes as the Indian and Chinese armies completed the first round of joint patrols in Demchok and Depsang along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh following disengagement in these areas.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is expected to meet his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun next week, in what could be the first interaction at the ministerial level between the two nations after the Line of Actual Control (LAC) disengagement at eastern Lakakh. The meeting will take place on the sidelines of the ASEAN Defence Ministers Plus (ADMM-Plus).

Earlier this month, India and China conducted a joint patrol at the friction points of Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh, following a recent troop disengagement in the area. Both sides have agreed to a weekly coordinated patrol to manage tensions that have simmered since the 2020 clash in the Galwan Valley.

India, on October 21, announced that it reached an agreement with China on patrolling along the LAC, marking a breakthrough in ending the over four-year-

long military standoff, which began following the deadly clashes between the troops of both countries in June 2020 in Galwan.

The ADMM-Plus is an annual meeting that will see participation from defence ministers of eight nations, including Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia, and the United States.

The last meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Chinese counterpart took place in April 2023 in India. Then Chinese Defence Minister Li Shangfu travelled to Delhi for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's defence ministers' meeting. The border issue was the main focus of the meeting.

Before the 2023 meeting, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met with then Chinese Defence Minister General Wei Fenghe in Moscow during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation meeting in 2020. This meeting occurred months after the deadly clashes in Galwan, Eastern Ladakh, in June of that year, which left 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead.

The upcoming talks in Laos are expected to witness discussions related to regional stability and border issues, building on the framework established by the LAC agreement.

As both nations navigate a complex bilateral relationship marked by border tensions and diplomatic negotiations, the meeting between Rajnath Singh and Dong Jun could play a crucial role in maintaining dialogue and promoting mutual understanding.

Earlier last month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Russia on the sidelines of the BRICS summit just after the LAC agreement was signed.

### **Nepal's exports to India suffer due to latter's concern about Chinese components**

11 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

India's ties with today's seemingly China-beholden Nepal is not as friendly as it historically used to be, while the India-China ties are far from normal, with the Oct 21 Depsang and Demchok patrolling deal being only the first step in a long and arduous process. But whatever may be the case, manufacturers and exporters in Nepal say they are in a dilemma over trade with India following restrictive measures imposed on their goods by New Delhi which wanted to ensure they were free of Chinese components, reported the *kathmandupost.com* Nov 10.

The Nepali government is silent on the issue even though the goods have not been sold to India for months, the report said.

In 2020, the Indian government asked the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to prescribe mandatory

standards for imported goods in line with international quality norms. The move was stated to be aimed to prevent Chinese goods from entering India from any of its neighbours.

India-China relations plunged to their nadir since 1962 in mind-2020 following the Galwan valley clash in Ladakh in which 20 Indian and at least four Chinese soldiers lost their lives.

India imposed a series of economic measures against China, which included banning a large number of popular Chinese mobile apps. India also imposed import restrictions on more than 370 Chinese products, the report noted.

The report cited "insiders" as saying India does not want any products from Nepal that have Chinese components, including Nepal's hydroelectricity, greatly worrying Nepal's top exporters.

The BIS deals with the marking and certifying of goods, incorporating quality standards and information on international norms to be followed while importing.

Sanitary pads and diaper factories, for example, used to operate 12 hours a day when the demand in India boomed, but due to the export obstacles, factories have reduced operating hours by 4 hours, Dol Raj Adhikari, president of the Nepal Sanitary and Diaper Association, has said. Adhikari owns the AG Health Industries Private Limited that produces sanitary pads and diapers in Bhairahawa.

According to the association, Nepal used to export three truckloads of sanitary pads and diapers daily. There are 29 sanitary pads and diaper factories in Nepal, large and small, employing 6,000 workers, the report said.

Likewise, a big consignment of Goldstar shoes failed to get export clearance after India refused to issue the BIS certificate, putting Nepal's home-grown shoemaker on the brink, the report said.

The BIS certificate issue is stated to have put the industries in Rupandehi in a big dilemma. "They were opened to export goods to India," Thakur Kumar Shrestha, president of the Siddhartha Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has said, adding, it has negatively impacted both the industries and Nepal's trade.

He has said factories were either running at half capacity or getting shut down, with workers being laid off.

Exports from the cement makers in Rupandehi—such as Arghakhanchi Cement, Sarbottam Cement, Palpa Cement, and Balaji Cement—have completely stopped for nearly two months, the report said.

Except plywood, the export of all the listed goods that require a BIS certificate has come to a halt, Shrestha has said. "India has neither renewed the certificate nor provided a new one."

Plywood has been given until Mar 2025 for certification-free export, the report said.



Out of 80 plywood factories, 52 had deposited charges to obtain the BIS certificate. However, after completing the process in June, the inspection team from India has not provided a BIS certificate so far, Hom Prasad Ghimire, president of the Nepal Plywood Manufacturers Association, has said. The plywood industry employs 25,000 workers across Nepal.

Posh Raj Pandey, chairman of the South Asia Watch of Economics, Environment and Trade, has said lack of coordination among government agencies and frequent changes of bureaucrats had put the issue on the back burner.

### **Indian Army denies reports China is causing deadlock in coordinating Depsang patrolling**

09 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

The Indian Army has on Nov 7 dismissed media reports that military talks between India and China on the modalities of patrols had reached a deadlock in eastern Ladakh's Depsang, saying no roadblocks or objections had been faced. It called the media reports "speculative and bereft of facts". However, the *tribuneindia.com* said Nov 7 that it stood by its Nov 6 news story.

In a post on X on Thursday (Nov 7), the Additional Directorate General of Public Information of the Army said some reports on Wednesday and Thursday had speculated about roadblocks in the disengagement process in Depsang and Demchok after an agreement between India and China last month.

"It is unambiguously stated that the disengagement at Depsang and Demchok has been completed and implementation of consensus, as agreed to, is being undertaken in a planned manner that includes resumption of patrolling to traditional patrolling areas. There are no roadblocks/objections from either side that have been faced in this process," the *ndtv.com* quoted the Army as saying.

"The articles published in this regard are speculative and bereft of facts. The concerned media houses are requested to verify and authenticate facts before publishing such sensitive articles and exercise due editorial discretion so that no unsubstantiated or misleading information is propagated," the post was further quoted as saying.

The report also quoted India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar as having said earlier, "We reached an agreement on patrolling, and we have gone back to the 2020 position. With that, we can say the disengagement with China has been completed... There are areas which, for various reasons after 2020, they blocked us, we blocked them. We have now reached an understanding which will allow patrolling as we had been doing till 2020."

Earlier, in its Nov 6 report, the *tribuneindia.com* said, citing unnamed sources, that the two sides had reached a deadlock over the "extent and routes of patrolling" at Depsang along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It said this had happened during the two sides' negotiations on the modalities of patrols at patrolling points (PPs) 10, 11, 11-A, 12 and 13 on the eastern edge of Depsang.

The report said the Chinese side had raised two issues. Firstly, it had reservations about the Indian Army going full extent on the PPs 10 and 11 routes. Secondly, it had reservations about the extent (distance) of patrol on PPs 11A, 12 and 13.

In its clarification, the *tribuneindia.com* said Nov 7: "The Army, in its response, has not said patrolling has started on all routes in Depsang. The news item did not question consensus or disengagement process. It only said China was delaying modalities. It did not say the Indian Army was 'not abiding' by the consensus."

### **'Other steps could happen': EAM Jaishankar on India-China ties after LAC disengagement**

03 November 2024, [Times of India](#)

External affairs minister S Jaishankar said Sunday that India and China have made "some progress" in disengaging along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), calling it a "welcome" move that could lead to further positive steps in the relationship. His remarks come after Indian and Chinese troops recently completed disengagement at two major friction points-Demchok and Depsang Plains-in eastern Ladakh. The minister said that following a recent meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Russia, plans were set for further discussions involving India's national security advisor and the foreign ministry. "So that's where things are," he noted, adding that the disengagement "opens up the possibility that other steps could happen."

"In terms of India and China, yes, we have made some progress," Jaishankar said during an interaction with the Indian diaspora in Brisbane. "Our relations were very, very disturbed for reasons all of you know. We have made some progress in what we call disengagement, which is when troops were very close to each other, with the possibility that could lead to some untoward incident."

The disengagement process, which saw Indian forces beginning verification patrolling at Depsang and Demchok on Friday, is seen as a significant step towards resolving lingering border issues from the 2020 standoff. The LAC had seen large deployments of Chinese troops, a move countered by India, and this increase in forces on both sides contributed to heightened tensions.

“There are very large numbers of Chinese troops deployed along the Line of Actual Control who were not there before 2020. And we, in turn, have counter-deployed,” Jaishankar added. This new agreement on patrolling and disengagement was formalised after several rounds of talks, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri had earlier said, marking a potential breakthrough to end the four-year standoff along the LAC. The Galwan Valley clash in June 2020 had deeply strained relations between the two countries, making disengagement and talks essential steps in normalising ties.

Jaishankar, in Brisbane on the first leg of a two-nation tour, also addressed global issues, including conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East, expressing concern over their impact on global stability. Highlighting India’s role in promoting diplomacy, he said Prime Minister Modi had been actively involved in discussions with leaders of Russia and Ukraine. “We are trying to do something in both,” Jaishankar stated, emphasising India’s commitment to a diplomatic resolution in both regions. On the Middle East, he said that India is attempting to prevent further escalation of tensions, pointing out the challenges in mediating between Iran and Israel due to a lack of direct communication. “At the moment, the effort is more to prevent the conflict from spreading,” he said, hinting at India’s involvement without divulging specific details. Touching upon the Quad alliance, Jaishankar explained that the grouping of India, Australia, Japan, and the United States is focused on a broad agenda that includes maritime security, connectivity, and climate forecasting, among other areas. “You have four democracies, four market economies, four countries with a strong record of global contributions,” he said, underscoring the Quad’s broader purpose. During his Australian visit, Jaishankar will inaugurate India’s fourth consulate in the country and co-chair the 15th Foreign Ministers’ Framework Dialogue with Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong in Canberra.

### **China is building new villages on its remote Himalayan border. Some appear to have crossed the line**

05 November 2024, [CNN World](#), Simone McCarthy and Nectar Gan

High in the mist-shrouded Himalayas, a winding mountain road opens to a clearing in the pine forested valley, revealing rows of uniform Tibetan-style houses, each topped with a Chinese flag.

Construction is booming in this remote place. Piles of logs and other building materials line the road. On a nearby hillside, cranes tower over rising housing blocks.

“They are building resettlement houses here,” says the Chinese travel vlogger who captured these scenes last year, speaking into his phone on a roadside. “When people live and settle here, it undeniably confirms that this is our country’s territory.”

But the village – known as Demalong and formally founded in March last year with a community of 70 families, according to a government notice seen in the footage – is not only located in territory claimed by the world’s ascendent superpower.

It is one of a string of Chinese settlements that also fall well within the border shown on official maps of Bhutan – a Buddhist kingdom of fewer than 1 million people that’s never agreed on a formal international border with China.

For centuries, herders looking for summer pastures were the main presence in this harsh and inhospitable region some 14,000 feet (4,200 meters) above sea level in the eastern Himalayas. But now, there is a growing population as the Chinese government incentivizes hundreds of people to settle there from across Tibet, the region of China that borders Bhutan. Those settlements show another, quieter front in China’s expanding efforts to assert its control over disputed, peripheral territories – also playing out in the South and East China Seas – as Chinese leader Xi Jinping seeks to bolster national security and enhance China’s position over its rivals.

Bhutan and China have been holding yet-unresolved border talks for decades. Looming in the backdrop of those discussions is India, China’s biggest regional rival and Bhutan’s close diplomatic ally.

The nuclear-armed neighbors have previously gone to war and more recently engaged in a series of skirmishes over their disputed 2,100-mile (3,379-kilometer) border, which straddles Bhutan – and, in Beijing’s eyes, makes the small Himalayan nation all the more critical to its national security.

CNN has reviewed satellite images provided by Earth data company Planet Labs, as well as Chinese government notices, state media reports, and social media footage, which together reveal extensive development in a valley China calls the Jigenong, or Jakarlung in Tibetan. Locations of the construction were provided to CNN by modern Tibet studies expert Robert Barnett of SOAS University of London.

CNN has geolocated four officially named villages and a fifth settlement using satellite images and videos in state and social media.

A comparison of China’s official map of the Tibet Autonomous Region and Bhutan’s national map published in its 2023 Statistical Yearbook show this development is located in territory claimed by both countries.

Bhutanese authorities, however, have repeatedly rejected previous reports of Chinese encroachment, including in a foreign media interview last year when

then-Prime Minister Lotay Tshering “categorically” denied that China had been building in Bhutan’s territory.

In response to a request for comment from CNN about the construction and its territorial claims, Bhutan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade said there were “no Chinese settlements” in its northern district of Lhuntse, where CNN identified the villages.

“The map of Bhutan covering the northern border will be finalized in accordance to the demarcation of the Bhutan-China border,” the ministry’s statement said. It also pointed to the two countries’ boundary talks and said Bhutan was “confident that the northern border will be finalized in the near future.”

China’s foreign ministry did not deny building villages in disputed territory when approached by CNN for comment on the construction.

“China’s construction activities in the border region with Bhutan are aimed at improving the local livelihoods,” a ministry statement said. “China and Bhutan have their own claims regarding the territorial status of the relevant region, but both agree to resolve differences and disputes through friendly consultations and negotiations.”

New research shared in advance with CNN by a team led by SOAS’ Barnett extensively tracks the Chinese construction of what the researchers classified as 19 “cross-border villages” and three smaller settlements since 2016.

The construction has taken place in border regions in northeast Bhutan and the west of the kingdom – near the disputed border between India and China, according to the research. The findings, also described by Barnett in *The Diplomat*, add to his 2021 *Foreign Policy* magazine report on earlier construction in the same northern area – and document what the latest research describes as a new “surge” in building there since early last year.

Archival research by Barnett suggests Bhutan’s claims in this northern region stretch back much farther than China’s, he says. An official Chinese map from 1980 seen by CNN also shows the northern area as part of Bhutan.

“China, as the most powerful player in the relationship, seems to be conducting an experiment about whether it can more or less decide for itself whether or when it is entitled to take ownership of territory disputed with a neighbor ... and how and if the international community will respond,” Barnett told CNN.

### **High-altitude rivalry**

The blurry boundaries through the Himalayan peaks and plateaus separating China and its southern neighbors are often relics of imperial era agreements and nomadic routes – now charged with the nationalist rhetoric and military might of New Delhi and Beijing.

Landlocked by both, Bhutan has long navigated carefully between India – its largest development and trading partner, which until 2007 effectively controlled its foreign policy – and China, an economic and military giant with whom it has no formal diplomatic ties.

Bhutan’s place in their dispute was thrown into the spotlight in 2017, when the kingdom accused the Chinese army of building a road “inside Bhutanese territory” in the Doklam area, near a strategic and disputed junction between all three countries along Bhutan’s west.

Then, Indian troops moved into the area to block China – sparking a tense, 73-day standoff that threatened to pitch the rivals into conflict.

Though not part of India’s territorial claims, Doklam is close to the so-called “chicken’s neck,” or Siliguri Corridor, a vital artery between New Delhi and its far northeastern states. China claims Doklam has been its territory “since ancient times.”

Ultimately diffused, the incident was one more reminder for Beijing of the volatility of the unresolved border.

India and China reached an agreement on military disengagement along a section of their disputed border earlier this month – in a step toward easing tensions there.

However, strengthening its position in that rivalry has been a driving force for Beijing, experts say, as it extends its foothold in lands traditionally claimed by Bhutan – and enlists its citizens to relocate there to press its counterclaim.

CNN has reached out to India’s Ministry of External Affairs for comment on the Chinese construction.

“Knowing India has a strong presence in Bhutan, China naturally becomes vulnerable in the bordering region,” said Rishi Gupta, assistant director at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New Delhi.

“This vulnerability compels China to enhance its influence in Bhutan and assert its territorial claims more aggressively, seeking to counterbalance India’s strategic partnerships in the area.”

One year prior to the 2017 standoff, Beijing was already starting a major bid to bolster its claims by building roads and villages in the Jakarlung valley – along another China-Bhutan frontier far to the northeast of Doklam.

The buildup follows what observers say were long-standing efforts by China to convince Bhutan’s leaders to cede their claims in the west around Doklam – in exchange for Beijing giving up its claims to the northern areas.

In 2016, China founded Jieliubu, its first official village in the Jakarlung valley. Two years later, Jieliubu was branded a model “border xiaokang village” – one of hundreds of such villages built or upgraded in recent years along China’s western and southern frontiers.

The “xiaokang” – or “moderate prosperity” – villages along China’s borders have been billed as part of Beijing’s scheme to eradicate poverty and improve living conditions in its far-flung frontiers.

But experts say these villages are also part of Xi’s vision to use civilian settlements to solidify control of China’s border, amid perceived threats of foreign encroachment and infiltration – and a growing obsession with security.

“Only when there are people can the border remain stable,” the leader is often quoted as saying by officials in frontier regions.

By 2022, more than 600 “border xiaokang villages” – including Jieliubu – had been completed in Tibet, boosting its border population by 10.5%, the regional government said in its annual work report.

“It is no doubt that the villages are aimed to strengthen China’s territorial claims and control of the border regions, especially the disputed areas,” said Yun Sun, director of the China program at the Stimson Center think tank in Washington.

“Once the Chinese villagers are there, China has causes for stationing troops and performing administrative control. The strategy has a long history in China, tracing back as early as the Han dynasty,” she said.

#### **No place anybody would choose**

Chinese construction that began in the Jakurlung valley in 2016 has ramped up since last year relative to earlier periods, according to the research by SOAS’s Barnett, based on satellite imagery.

In the west, construction began around 2019 but appeared to have stopped after 2022, the research found. For that reason, CNN’s reporting has focused on development in the area along Bhutan’s northern border.

As of this summer, more than 2,000 residential units – estimated to have space for thousands of people – had been built in multiple settlements across both areas, according to the report.

That buildup has also been supported by an expanding network of roads, which geointelligence researcher Damien Symon says have progressed south from China into Bhutan over recent years.

“None of the roads connect into Bhutan, they start from the Chinese border and end in forest areas. There is no connectivity to existing Bhutanese roads or villages,” said Symon, of analysis collective The Intel Lab, who in a December 2023 report for London-based think tank Chatham House tracked new Chinese construction “across the contested border with Bhutan” in the north.

Road access is crucial for new settlements in the Jakarlung valley, which Chinese reports say used to be cut off from the outside world by heavy snow for half the year.

“These are not places anybody would normally choose to relocate to, because they are either extremely high or extremely exposed to the elements,” Barnett said.

To populate the cold, damp valley, officials in Tibet entice settlers from across the region with spacious new homes and generous subsidies.

In Jieliubu, the Tibetan herders moved into two-story houses with courtyards. Residents aged 16 and older are eligible for an annual subsidy of more than 20,000 yuan (about \$2,800), state media reported.

Patriotic education is part of everyday life in Jieliubu. In 2021, the village held 150 study sessions on Xi’s speeches, party policies and history, Mandarin Chinese and border defense, state media reported. Since then, the village has also undergone a major expansion.

Meanwhile, in the southeastern part of the valley, Demalong has added 235 new homes since last year and aims to build a kindergarten and a clinic, according to government statements. It also has a military compound, the travel blogger’s video shows.

In between Jieliubu and Demalong, China has constructed more settlements along the valley, recently completing two new villages: Qujielong and Semalong. CNN has also geolocated a fifth settlement that has yet to be named in official notices.

Since late September, a new wave of residents has moved into Demalong, Jieliubu, Semalong and Qujielong from as far as Nagqu, a city in northern Tibet some seven hours’ drive away, according to a local government notice and videos shared by relocatees on Chinese social media.

The new families, arriving in long columns of vans, coaches and trucks escorted by police cars, were greeted by red banners and traditional Tibetan dances, social media footage shows.

#### **‘No intrusion’**

Bhutan has repeatedly denied that Chinese construction has taken place in its territory.

Asked in March last year about reports of China building in the kingdom’s north, then-Prime Minister Lotay Tshering told Belgian outlet La Libre, “We are not making a big deal of it because it’s not in Bhutan.” “We have said categorically that there is no intrusion as mentioned in the media,” he said. “This is an international border and we know exactly what belongs to us.”

In a separate interview with India’s The Hindu about six months later, the former prime minister, whose government was replaced in elections earlier this year, reiterated that “there are no real differences between China and Bhutan, but there is an un-demarcated border dating back to Tibet-Bhutan ties,” referring to the period before Tibet’s 1951 official annexation by Beijing.

As early as 2020, Bhutan’s ambassador to India [said](#) there was “no Chinese village inside

Bhutan,” following Indian media reports about such development in the kingdom’s western borderlands. That appears to be in sharp contrast to recent decades when Bhutan repeatedly protested what it claimed were incursions into its territory by Chinese soldiers and Tibetan herders. In 1997, Thimphu told Beijing that Tibetan herders had been intruding into the Jakarlung valley and even constructed sheds there, according to Bhutan’s National Assembly records cited by Barnett.

In a 1998 pact, the two countries agreed to maintain the status quo in the border region as they continue talks to resolve the “boundary question.”

Observers say Bhutan’s rhetoric on this issue has become increasingly opaque in recent years, and some wonder whether the kingdom’s muted comments are because it’s already reached a tacit understanding with China to give up some territorial claims.

Others suggest Bhutan’s priority may be to keep relations stable so they can finally reach a deal – with the potential to ease the uncertainty of the countries’ power imbalance and bring the economic benefits of normalized ties.

“Most Bhutanese would love to see the borders demarcated and settled and a new chapter of friendly relations with China,” said Bhutanese scholar Karma Phuntsho.

But while Bhutan remains “keen to solve the border issues with China,” the remote border areas have little impact on Bhutanese peoples’ livelihoods, so, “the countries are taking time to reach the best mutually beneficial solutions,” he added.

Other observers take a more pointed view.

The Bhutanese “have realized that they have no way in which they can get back anything which the Chinese have occupied, and they lack the capacity ... to police the border, let alone the military capacity to retrieve anything from the border,” said Manoj Joshi, a distinguished fellow at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi.

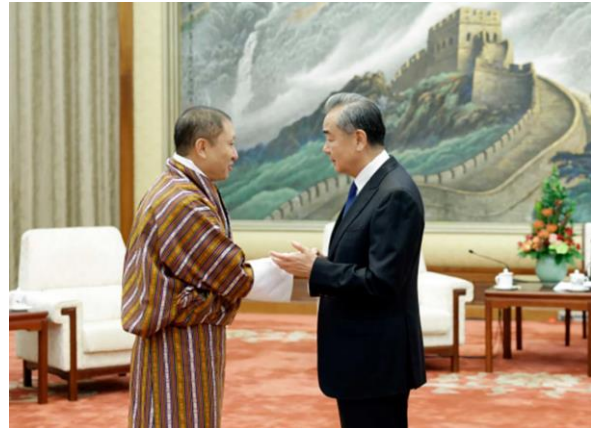
“So at one level, they have taken the position that they will try and resolve the border issue ... pending that settlement, they don’t want anything to come up.”

Despite the negotiations over the decades, the kingdom has already shed land to China.

Bhutan’s official maps have lost a parcel of land to its northwest and the Menchuma valley and plateau in its northeast, according to Barnett. That northwest parcel, which includes Kula Kangri mountain, is often cited as covering some 400 square kilometers (154 sq miles).

In its response to CNN, Bhutan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade said these two areas “are not inside of Bhutan.”

“These areas fall north to the traditional boundary between Bhutan and China,” its statement said.



Bhutanese Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji, left, and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meet in Beijing in October 2023.

Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In 2021, Bhutanese and Chinese officials agreed to a “road map” to expedite settling their border. They picked up formal talks last October for the first time since the Doklam standoff, with Bhutan’s foreign minister making a rare visit to Beijing.

There, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi assured counterpart Tandi Dorji that Beijing was ready to “fix and develop China-Bhutan friendly relations in legal form.”

In its response to CNN, China’s foreign ministry said the “two sides are actively seeking a boundary demarcation arrangement that is acceptable to both, in accordance with the principle of fairness, rationality, mutual understanding and mutual accommodation.”

Regardless of how each side defines the location of these developments, they appear to be part of a long-term plan for China to strengthen its position and apply pressure along the yet un-demarcated border.

This year, a local government chief from a county in Tibet has visited the villages in the Jakarlung valley at least twice to inspect construction projects and check in with residents.

During a visit in April, the official reminded local cadres and residents of their mission.

“(We’re) lacking oxygen but not spirit, enduring hardship without fear, overcoming higher altitudes with an even higher sense of purpose,” he said, quoting a 2020 speech by Xi.

### Relationship between India and Tibet is centuries old: CM

05 November 2024, [The Arunachal Times](#), Prem Chetry

“The relationship between India and Tibet is centuries old, and it is our responsibility to maintain and continue this relationship,” said Chief Minister Pema Khandu during the consecration and inauguration of the newly constructed Dukhang, the prayer hall of



Thubchog Gatsel Ling (TGL) monastery, by His Holiness, the 104th Gaden Tripa-the throne holder of Gaden Monastery of the Gelug sect, Jetsun Lobsang Tenzin Palzangpo, from Gaden Monastery in Mundgod, Karnataka, here on Monday.

The Chief Minister further stated, "Monasteries are of great significance; we must learn the Bhoti script to understand more about the religion. The Nalanda tradition of Buddhism is important, as it went to Tibet and descended to Arunachal Pradesh."

"I believe the Buddhist community of the Himalayan region has a strong devotion to the religion; however, this devotion needs to be transformed into wisdom, for which learning the Bhoti language, the Tibetan script, is essential," he added. He noted that "Bhoti teachers have now been added to schools, and children are studying Bhoti." He also announced that a scholarship provision will be introduced soon to support monks and nuns.

Also present on the occasion were Penpa Tsering, Sikyong of the Central Tibetan Administration, Government in Exile; Speaker Khenpo Sonam Tenphel; and Member of Parliament Geshe Atuk Tseten of the Central Tibetan Administration, Government in Exile. Sikyong Penpa Tsering, in his address, said, "Use the monastery as a center of learning and align your mind with the teachings of Buddha. Since we lost our country in 1959, a series of misfortunes has befallen Tibet, followed by natural and man-made disasters, especially during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, when six thousand monasteries were destroyed across China and Tibet." The Sikyong further expressed hope that the new monastery will ensure the continuity of the religion and impart spiritual wisdom among the masses in the region.

His Holiness Jetsun Lobsang Tenzin Palzangpo, in his address, said, "The consecration and inauguration have been completed; now what remains is to improve and continue the teachings of Buddha. The main goal from now on is to impart and practice the teachings of Buddha."

"First and foremost is our health. If we are physically unwell, we cannot carry out our activities, so we need to take good care of it. Hence, we can use our bodies for good causes," he added.

"His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, always guides us. Proper upbringing of children is necessary, whether at school, at home, or in monasteries; we must take care of children's upbringing," His Holiness added.

Earlier, His Eminence, the 12th Guru Tulku Rinpoche of the monastery, said, "The monastery was established by my predecessor, the 11th Guru Tulku Rinpoche, and it has been a center of spirituality. The monastery will serve as a center of learning."

MP Tapir Gao, while congratulating the people, said, "The monastery will serve to disseminate the

teachings of Buddha, not only in Arunachal Pradesh but to the entire world."

The foundation stone of the new prayer hall was laid by His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, in 2017. Devotees from neighbouring Bhutan, MLAs from Tawang and West Kameng districts, and heads of departments also witnessed the ceremony.

### **Union minister Rijiju interacts with Chinese soldiers in Arunachal as eastern Ladakh disengagement set for completion**

02 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

In a culmination of the ongoing disengagement process in eastern Ladakh, India's federal government minister Mr Kiren Rijiju has on Nov 1 interacted with soldiers of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) near Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh along the India-Tibet border.

The interaction occurred when Rijiju, the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs as well as of Minority Affairs, and who belongs to the state, visited an Indian Army post on the occasion of Diwali. He celebrated India's Hindu New Year festival of lights with Army jawans posted in Bumla on Oct 31.

The minister posted a video on X, formerly *Twitter*, where he could be seen talking to three PLA soldiers with the help of an interpreter.

He praised the kind of infrastructure built and other development works being carried out by the Indian government along the international border.

"After talking to Chinese soldiers and seeing the infrastructures, everyone will feel proud of India's border development now," the *PTI* news agency quoted him as saying Nov 1.

Rijiju's interaction with the PLA soldiers came about 10 days after India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that an agreement was finalised between India and China for a resolution of the issues that arose in 2020 in eastern Ladakh.

The agreement established a protocol on patrolling after disengagement of troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, a breakthrough to end the more than four-year standoff there.

Following the completion of the disengagement process at the two friction points in eastern Ladakh, the Indian Army began patrolling at Demchok on Nov 1. Patrolling at Depsang, the other friction point where the disengagement process in almost complete, will commence soon, reported the *indianexpress.com* Nov 2 and the *hindustantimes.com* Nov 1.

The agreement, reached on Oct 21, marked a significant development in the pursuit of reduced tension along the LAC in eastern Ladakh since the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in Jun 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the

two sides in decades. The ties between the two Asian giants had nosedived following the clash.

### **Indian and Chinese border troops exchange Diwali sweets after Depsang and Demchok disengagement**

01 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

On the occasion of Diwali, India's Hindu New Year festival of light, on Oct 31, Indian and Chinese troops have exchanged sweets on five locations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), including two in Ladakh. It came a day after the two sides completed military disengagement from the Depsang and Demchok areas in eastern Ladakh, in line with an Oct 21 patrolling arrangement deal.

The deal was hailed in India as the beginning of the normalization of bilateral ties which plunged to their nadir in the middle of Jun 2020 when troops from the two sides clashed in the Galwan valley of India's Union Territory of Ladakh, resulting in the admitted deaths of 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers.

The exchange of Diwali sweets took place at Chushul Maldo and Daulat Beg Oldi in Ladakh, Banchha (near Kibutu) and Bumla in Arunachal Pradesh, and Nathula in Sikkim, reported the [ndtv.com](#) Oct 31.

The patrolling deal called for removal of military personnel and infrastructure, including temporary camps, from the Depsang plains and Demchok, and the withdrawal of troops to pre-Apr 2020 positions. They were the last two spots from which China had adamantly refused to withdraw its troops in a series of both diplomatic and military talks.

The deal will end nearly four years of military and diplomatic tension triggered by skirmishes and violent clashes in the Pangong Lake and Galwan regions in May-Jun 2020, the report hoped.

The completion of the ongoing disengagement verification process – to cross-check to ensure that the two sides have, indeed, withdrawn their troops as agreed – will be followed by steps to de-escalate the border situation, and the discussion of managing the borders, to be then followed by the normalization of bilateral ties.

All this depends on the restoration of trust between the two sides, which was severely dented by China's violation of a series of written agreements, as repeatedly noted by India's External Affairs Minister Mr S Jaishankar.

Jaishankar declined to give a timeline for the de-escalation, saying only it would not happen till Delhi is sure that its Beijing counterparts had honoured their side of the deal, the report noted.

De-escalation still remained a concern in other areas, including the Gogra-Hot Springs area in Ladakh, after Indian and Chinese forces backed down in September last year. China continues to hold large swathes of

Indian territory to the north, in the Depsang plains area, the report said.

"After de-escalation, how to manage the borders will be discussed," Jaishankar has said.

Experts have cautioned India that China's current climb-down may be temporary, driven by its current economic difficulties and the resultant internal turmoil, and so not to normalize bilateral ties too quickly, as being sought by China.

Ambassador Xu Feihong of China has said that the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia on Oct 23 was very important. They "reached many important understandings" which will be "the guidelines for the further development of relations between our two countries."

"I hope that, under the guidance of this consensus, our relations will be moving forward smoothly in the future and they will not be restricted or interrupted by specific disagreements

between our two sides," [moneycontrol.com](#) Oct 31 quoted the ambassador saying on the NDTV news channel.

He has said he was "looking forward" to a future resumption of direct flights between India and his home country, which had remained suspended since 2020, something China has been seeking for some time.

Xu has also voiced optimism for increased collaboration between India and China across diverse sectors, such as trade, education, and scientific research. He emphasized that sustained progress in these domains would strengthen partnerships and mutual understanding between the two nations, contributing to a more cooperative regional environment, [zeenews.india.com](#) Oct 30 cited Xu as saying.

India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has described the border disengagement as a "major achievement" after years of diplomatic and military efforts. Addressing soldiers at Meghna Stadium in Tezpur, Assam, Singh has emphasized that the success was made possible by the dedication and bravery of India's armed forces.

"This is not a small development. After prolonged efforts, we have reached a consensus with China," [ddnews.gov.in](#) Oct 30 quoted Singh as saying, ahead of celebrating Diwali with the Indian troops in Tezpur.

## China leverages buddhist diplomacy to counter negative global perceptions?

29 November 2024, [Daily Mirror](#)

China's use of Buddhism in diplomacy is a key element of its foreign policy, particularly under Xi Jinping. The Chinese government leverages Buddhism, a shared cultural heritage in Asia, to enhance its soft power and strengthen ties with neighbouring countries, particularly those with Buddhist populations. This approach is part of China's broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), designed to foster socio-cultural relationships and promote peaceful cooperation.

Although China is often perceived as an atheist regime with limited space for religious freedom—especially given the destruction of monasteries during the Cultural Revolution—it has systematically re-framed Buddhism as both a local and ancient religion of China. This shift in perception serves multiple purposes: it counteracts the spread of Christianity with its Western associations, provides an alternative to growing domestic materialism, and offers a diplomatic link to countries with significant Buddhist populations or Buddhist-leaning philosophies.

Buddhism has proven to be an effective tool in promoting China's peaceful image, particularly with its immediate neighbors, many of which have Buddhist populations or Confucian teachings. At the forefront of this effort, China has sought to reshape its global image, distancing itself from the label of a revisionist power that poses a threat to international peace and security. Cultural exchanges and events like the World Buddhist Forum bring together Buddhist leaders and scholars from around the world to discuss shared values, promote peace, and foster goodwill. In addition, China has invested in renovating and building Buddhist temples and monasteries across various countries, aiming to project itself as a peaceful, culturally rich nation.

China's Buddhist diplomacy is heavily coordinated by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries (CPAFFC). Established in 1954, the CPAFFC plays a central role in promoting mutual understanding between China and other nations. The organization arranges cultural and religious exchanges, including those focused on Buddhism, to enhance international cooperation and peace. However, while the CPAFFC operates in a seemingly independent manner, it is deeply connected to China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and answers directly to the State Council. This connection to the Chinese Communist Party makes it an important tool in China's broader foreign policy strategy.

The CPAFFC actively works to influence both governmental and non-governmental organizations through Buddhist diplomacy. By hosting Buddhist conferences, cultural tours, and academic dialogues

## COMMENTARIES

on Buddhist philosophy, the organization seeks to shape global perceptions of China as a custodian of Buddhist heritage. Yet, its activities have raised concerns about China's broader soft power agenda. Critics argue that the CPAFFC uses Buddhist diplomacy to exert influence over sub-national governments and local political leaders, as demonstrated by its involvement in the World Buddhist Forum and other international events.

In 2023, Yang Wanming was appointed president of the CPAFFC, signaling Beijing's continued efforts to strengthen ties with regions like Latin America, where China is the second-largest trading partner after the U.S. These efforts have been met with suspicion from the West. In 2020, the U.S. State Department discontinued its participation in the US-China Governors Forum, citing concerns that the CPAFFC was attempting to influence state and local leaders. In 2022, the U.S. National Counterintelligence and Security Center issued a warning about the CPAFFC's activities, describing it as a tool for co-opting subnational governments and pressing China's geopolitical agenda.

The global promotion of Buddhism as a form of soft power by China is unprecedented in the modern world. While Beijing has become increasingly assertive in territorial disputes and has triggered multiple standoffs with its neighbors, it also recognizes the need to address the fears surrounding its rapid rise. In this context, Buddhist diplomacy serves as a counterbalance to the aggressive image China has cultivated through its territorial claims and other actions. Beijing believes that by emphasizing shared cultural and spiritual ties, it can allay the concerns of its neighbors, particularly in Southeast Asia, where the Belt and Road Initiative has sparked skepticism and resistance.

Xi Jinping has been at the forefront of this initiative, directing more resources into Buddhism as part of China's political and economic strategy. His 2014 speech at UNESCO emphasized Buddhism's integration into Chinese culture, referring to it as "Buddhism with Chinese characteristics." Xi's vision reflects China's historical self-image as the "Middle Kingdom," with surrounding countries falling within its cultural orbit. Under his leadership, China has worked to portray Buddhism not only as a local tradition but as a key component of China's global soft power.

However, this outward projection of Buddhist diplomacy is not without contradiction. While China promotes its version of Buddhism globally, it continues to suppress religious freedoms domestically, particularly in Tibet, where protests and self-immolations have been met with harsh repression. The government's promotion of Buddhism as a state tool also seeks to weaken the Tibetan independence movement, which Beijing labels as "spiritist."

In addition to its Buddhist diplomacy, China has implemented strict religious policies domestically. The Patriotic Education Law, enacted in 2024, mandates that religious groups—including Buddhist institutions—promote loyalty to the Communist Party. This law requires religious leaders and followers to align their practices with socialist values and includes provisions for increasing state control over religious activities. Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims face growing restrictions, with reports of raids on churches, restrictions on religious teachings, and forced alignments with state ideology.

Despite the internal repression, China continues to project itself as a leader in Buddhist diplomacy. This strategy is aimed at countering any potential resistance to its global initiatives, particularly the Belt and Road Initiative. Given China's limited global soft power, Buddhist diplomacy serves as a crucial tool for building China's image as a peaceful, culturally-rich, and diplomatic power. By positioning itself as the guardian of Buddhist heritage, China seeks to garner influence in Buddhist-majority countries and reduce the geopolitical risks posed by its growing economic and political influence.

### What's behind Nepal's pivot away from India?

29 November 2024, [TRT World](#), Deepak Adhikari

China's growing regional influence presents opportunities for Kathmandu, but the diplomatic shift comes with challenges.

Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's upcoming visit to China signals a strategic shift in Nepal's foreign policy: the Himalayan nation seems to be inching closer to Beijing as frustrations with New Delhi simmer.

While the visit (December 2-6) highlights Nepal's growing engagement with China, it also reflects the complexities of balancing its traditional ties with India. Oli's decision to prioritise China over India for his inaugural visit marks a break from a long-standing tradition among Nepalese leaders. Traditionally, successive prime ministers have visited New Delhi first, underscoring Nepal's cultural, economic and political ties with India.

However, after months of perceived snubs by the Indian leadership—including silence on Oli's [invitation](#) to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the UN General Assembly—the pivot to China appears calculated.

The Nepalese leader enjoys a close relationship with Chinese President Xi Jinping. His tenure has seen significant strides in Nepal-China relations, from signing the historic [Transit and Transportation Agreement](#) in 2016 to hosting Xi for a [state visit](#) in 2019.

These moves reflect Oli's broader strategy of reducing Nepal's dependence on India, particularly after the 2015 [blockade](#) imposed by New Delhi that crippled Nepal's economy.

China's growing regional influence presents opportunities for Kathmandu, but the pivot comes with challenges. Experts caution that Nepal's attempts to counterbalance India could alienate its southern neighbour, whose trade with Nepal stood at \$8.4 billion in 2023 compared to China's \$1.2 billion.

Bishnu Rijal, a central committee member of Oli's Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), says Beijing is poised to exploit the growing rift between Kathmandu and New Delhi.

"China is eager to fill the vacuum in Indo-Nepal ties," he said. "This strategic gap could be an opportunity for China, especially if criticisms of India intensify."

Oli's Beijing agenda is ambitious. It includes negotiating a waiver on the \$216 million loan for the Chinese-built Pokhara International Airport and finalising stalled Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. But Nepal's counting on China for infrastructure development raises questions about debt sustainability. Concerns about the Chinese "debt trap" grow, with many citing Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port as an example.

Chinese experts are sceptical about Nepal's prospects of securing a loan waiver. Gao Liang, deputy director of the Nepal Study Centre at the Institute of South Asian Studies at Sichuan University, says: "Personally, I don't think that's very likely. Making such a request in itself would not be conducive to Nepal's image enhancement in the international investment market." Gao says granting a waiver to Nepal could set an unsustainable precedent. Instead, he suggests that Nepal explore more practical options, such as negotiating an extension of the repayment period (which begins in 2026) or proposing alternative repayment methods agreeable to both countries.

Despite growing Chinese investments, India remains deeply embedded in Nepal's economic framework. From pipelines to transmission lines, India's connectivity projects have accelerated, contrasting with the delays and complications in BRI projects.

#### **India-China rapprochement**

Oli's visit coincides with a thaw in India-China border tensions, marked by recent agreements to cooperate on patrols. While this rapprochement could reduce Kathmandu's leverage in playing one neighbour against the other, it also opens doors for trilateral cooperation in trade, energy and infrastructure.

Experts argue that a harmonious India-China relationship could ease regional tensions, benefiting smaller nations like Nepal. However, this balancing act is not always easy.

"Nepal must avoid positioning China as an alternative to India. Instead, we should aim for a balanced

approach, maintaining strong ties with both nations," says Rupak Sapkota, a foreign policy expert.

"Historically, Nepal has leaned towards China when its relations with India deteriorate, but this reactive strategy is no longer viable in today's complex geopolitical landscape."

Nepal's growing engagement with China mirrors broader trends in South Asia, where Beijing's infrastructure diplomacy is reshaping the region. This rivalry creates opportunities for Nepal but also risks, as the country seeks to balance its development ambitions with maintaining independence.

Sapkota, who served as a foreign policy adviser to Oli's predecessor Pushpa Kamal Dahal, says Nepal had developed strategic autonomy by consistently declining to join the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy or China's Global Security Initiative.

Nepal also rejected India's Agnipath scheme, a military recruitment programme.

However, this neutrality comes with costs. Major powers have scaled back aid, as much of it is tied to alliance memberships, slowing Nepal's access to international economic cooperation. Reduced international aid and slowed access to economic cooperation have hampered development.

China's strict COVID-19 policies had also strained ties, stalling key infrastructure projects and limiting tourism.

Meanwhile, India's influence remains strong, rooted in shared cultural ties and economic interdependence.

As Oli courts Beijing, Nepal must carefully navigate its relationships with both neighbours. Leveraging China's infrastructure diplomacy while maintaining ties with India requires nuanced strategy.

"While India may attempt to pressure Nepal to avoid tilting towards China, the depth of current China-Nepal relations makes such a shift unlikely. The partnership has advanced to a level where it cannot be easily undermined," Sapkota says.

#### **China's military corruption crackdown explained**

28 November 2024, France24

**Beijing has removed top military official Miao Hua from office pending a probe into "serious violations of discipline" -- a common euphemism for corruption.**

Miao joins a host of high-ranking figures, including two former defence ministers, to fall foul of a sweeping crackdown in the country's military in just over a year. Analysts say corruption may have eroded Chinese combat readiness -- raising fears in Beijing as it conducts its largest military build-up in decades.

Here's how the crackdown has unfolded so far:

**'Chronic distrust'**



Chinese President Xi Jinping has waged a sweeping campaign against deep-seated official corruption since coming to power over a decade ago.

Proponents say the policy promotes clean governance, while critics say it helps Xi purge political rivals.

In the past year, that drive has focused on the armed forces, with nearly 20 military and defence industry officials removed since summer 2023.

Some of the biggest fish so far ensnared have been defence ministers.

State media has confirmed that both Wei Fenghe and his successor Li Shangfu have been expelled from the ruling Communist Party and are under corruption investigations.

"Xi appears to be chronically distrustful of his most prominent military officials," Ankit Panda, Stanton Senior Fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, told AFP.

Analysts at the time linked the purge to a wider investigation into the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Rocket Force, which oversees China's nuclear and conventional missiles and would likely be Beijing's first line of attack in the event of a major conflict.

Both former defence ministers had links to the force - Wei previously headed the unit and Li Shangfu led a department that developed weapons including missiles.

The unit's chief, Li Yuchao, and chief of staff, Sun Jinming, were expelled from the party and investigated for corruption in July.

Three senior officials were also removed from their posts at state-owned missile defence organisations in December 2023.

#### **Beyond the Rocket Force**

British newspaper the Financial Times this week reported that defence minister Dong Jun was under investigation -- reports that Beijing on Thursday dismissed as "pure fabrications".

But Miao and Dong's removal, if confirmed, could suggest the graft purge is widening.

Miao had no clear ties to the rocket force, climbing the ranks in the army and then being promoted to admiral in the navy in 2015.

Similarly, the defence minister -- appointed in December -- forged his career in the navy and eventually became its commander.

Reports of Dong's fall suggested "the rot in China's military remains even deeper than previously suspected", Neil Thomas, a fellow on Chinese politics at the Asia Society, told AFP.

The crackdown has come as China has increased military pressure on Taiwan and repeatedly pushed up against its neighbours over disputed territory in the South China Sea.

But analysts say graft in the military may be raising worries that the army isn't up to the job.

"Corruption in the Chinese military rightly should raise questions about its ability to achieve military objectives and reach the 'great rejuvenation' envisioned by Xi," Heather Williams, director of the Project on Nuclear Issues at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies wrote.

#### **Compromised**

Bloomberg, citing US intelligence, reported this year that rampant corruption in the Rocket Force had led to malfunctioning equipment and even missile fuel being replaced with water.

"If true, these flaws would compromise missile operations, calling into question China's nuclear force readiness and overall capabilities," the Federation of American Scientists wrote in an open letter in response to the claims.

Xi has vowed that the reunification of the Chinese mainland and Taiwan is inevitable and pledged to take "all measures necessary" to achieve that goal.

The recent crackdown "raises the question of who Xi has left that he can trust and how deep the scandals run that have taken down these key officials," said Joel Wuthnow, senior research fellow at National Defense University in the US.

"It has to be a huge distraction... as he presses the PLA to be ready for a war with Taiwan by 2027."

This month, Xi visited members of the country's air force in central Hubei province, urging them to root out corruption and "unhealthy tendencies".

"(We) must keep firmly in mind our duties and missions, increase our sense of war preparedness and tighten our preparations for military struggles," Xi told soldiers.

But with Miao's removal, analysts expect the corruption crackdown to continue to distract from that goal.

"Competition for top positions is so fierce that there might be some mutual recriminations between officers which would lead to endless cycles of arrests, new appointments and recriminations," Victor Shih, an expert on elite Chinese politics, told AFP.

#### **Xi Jinping Doesn't Have an Answer for China's Demographic Crisis**

28 November 2024, [Foreign Policy](#), Lizzi C. Lee

A call for a "high-quality population" ignores the country's real problems.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent article in *Qiushi*, the Communist Party's flagship journal for outlining core ideology and policy, frames China's demographic challenges as a strategic opportunity. It offers Xi's most detailed vision yet for addressing the country's aging population: shifting from a labor-intensive, population-driven economy to one powered by innovation, education, and productivity. Yet beneath

the lofty rhetoric lies a familiar and contentious concept: *renkou suzhi*, or “population quality.”

The notion of *suzhi* has long been a cornerstone of Chinese policymaking, shaping debates on everything from education to health care. On the surface, it advocates for cultivating a healthier, better educated, and more skilled population. But its implications run deeper—and are more divisive. Historically, *suzhi* has been used to draw lines between urban elites and rural or migrant populations, carrying connotations of class bias and, at times, embracing eugenicist thinking. Implicit in calls for a “high-quality population” is the judgment of a “low-quality” counterpart, reinforcing societal divides in a way that is rarely acknowledged outright.

What is striking is the emphatic personal stamp Xi has placed on this familiar rhetoric. He describes “high-quality population development” as a “new concept” first proposed by himself—a policy pivot aimed at addressing demographic shifts by fostering a “high-quality workforce.” Xi’s framing emphasizes a sharper economic focus: moving beyond controlling population size to prioritizing quality, optimizing structures, and enhancing mobility.

Xi’s vision is clear: a population that is educated, innovative, and adaptable, equipped to power China’s ambitions to leapfrog the United States in next-generation advanced manufacturing and technology, while remaining resilient to geopolitical headwinds. Yet the systemic realities of China’s political and economic structures make its realization anything but straightforward. The gap between aspiration and implementation remains vast, with no easy solutions offered by Xi.

It’s true that the challenges of an aging population are not unique to China; much of the developed world, particularly East Asia, is grappling with similar issues. Japan and South Korea, for instance, are contending with the burdens of a rapidly greying society.

But China’s situation stands apart in its complexity. Aging isn’t merely a demographic hurdle—it is amplifying long-standing structural weaknesses. The very obstacles hindering the implementation of Xi’s vision lie in the entrenched flaws of China’s economic and political systems—issues that Xi has either avoided addressing or delayed reforming. Persistent regional disparities continue to leave rural areas under-resourced and underserved, while the rigid *hukou* system, which ties access to essential public services like health care and education to your residence permit, effectively traps millions in low-opportunity regions, cutting them off from better health care, education, and jobs. Declining birth rates and shifting family norms reflect a younger generation increasingly unwilling—or unable—to embrace traditional expectations, squeezed by skyrocketing

costs and evolving societal values. Further complicating matters, the state’s tight grip on private enterprise has stifled the innovation and risk-taking spirit critical to driving genuine progress.

For all its ambition, the path to achieving Xi’s vision is riddled with contradictions, with labor mobility as a glaring example. While factory and service jobs in urban hubs seldom require a local *hukou*, access to top-tier schools and hospitals does, perpetuating a tiered system where affluent cities like Shanghai and Hangzhou boast cutting-edge eldercare facilities and world-class health care for the wealthy, while rural areas in backwater provinces like Liaoning and Heilongjiang tell a starkly different story. There, aging farmers with no pensions often work well into their 70s, trapped by inadequate infrastructure and meager local resources.

As the population ages, these inequalities become even more pronounced. Older rural residents remain cut off from advanced medical care, while urban areas grapple with labor shortages in critical sectors like health care and elder services. Reforming the *hukou* system could ease these pressures by allowing for greater mobility and access to urban services, but such a move would disrupt deeply entrenched administrative structures prioritizing control over equitable mobility. Resistance to such reforms, coupled with the slow pace of implementation, leaves these bottlenecks unresolved.

Without meaningful redistribution, rural elderly populations will continue to be excluded from the health care and social support systems concentrated in urban centers. Yet Beijing’s centralized governance—and its reluctance to devolve power to local governments—makes such redistribution exceedingly difficult to achieve. Instead, the gap widens further, a stark reminder of the uneven distribution of China’s modernization.

Urban governance policies add yet another layer of complexity. Major hubs like Beijing and Shanghai actively limit population growth by restricting *hukou* transfers, channeling labor toward second- and third-tier cities. This approach creates a dynamic where migrants contribute economically to urban centers but remain excluded from the full benefits of urban life, entrenching disparities and undermining efforts to build a truly mobile and adaptable workforce.

China’s shifting social norms add another layer of complexity. Marriage and birth rates have plummeted, with the country’s marriage rate falling to 4.8 per 1,000 people in 2022, down from double that a decade earlier. Meanwhile, the birth rate declined to 6.77 per 1,000 people in 2022, marking the lowest rate since records began in 1949. These declines are driven by skyrocketing housing costs, relentless job competition, and changing attitudes among younger generations, for whom traditional family structures are increasingly

unaffordable or unappealing. Financial incentives—subsidies for childcare, housing, or education—might help, but they won't work without broader reforms that make family life less burdensome. Reducing costs, increasing gender equality, and improving work-life balance would require systemic change, but if history is any guide, the Chinese leadership's wariness of "welfarism"—the belief that easing life's burdens risks fostering complacency—leaves little room for the flexibility and empathy such solutions demand. Meanwhile, the deeply ingrained cultural preference for men that continues to dominate workplaces will take time—and concerted effort—to shift.

At the same time, the state pension system is lurching toward insolvency. Long plagued by low-yield investments and drained further by pandemic-related spending, China's pension funds are projected to run out by 2035. Raising the retirement age—already a politically sensitive issue—won't be enough to solve the problem. More sustainable reforms, such as diversifying investments and adopting market-driven strategies, would necessitate opening up capital markets and ceding some control over financial systems—a step for which Beijing has shown little appetite.

Even as Xi champions a transition to an innovation-driven economy, his administration's previous approach to private enterprise has significantly eroded trust within the business and investment communities. The regulatory crackdowns initiated in 2021 wiped out more than \$1 trillion from the market value of major companies, severely impacting investor confidence. Breakthroughs in biomedicine, health care innovation, and new models of eldercare delivery require more than state investment; they depend on the freedom of individuals and businesses to take risks, experiment, and occasionally fail. However, the state's growing control over private enterprise, coupled with inconsistent and at times capricious regulations, has fostered an environment where caution stifles creativity, eroding the foundations of innovation essential for meaningful progress.

Comparisons with other aging societies offer valuable, if limited, insights. Japan illustrates the dangers of inertia, where delayed reforms led to stagnation and hindered adaptability, even as the country developed world-class eldercare systems. South Korea's generous pronatalist policies have largely fallen short, unable to overcome deep structural barriers such as high housing costs and rigid gender norms. Germany's relative success in leveraging immigration to mitigate aging pressures provides a compelling example of labor mobility in action, though such an approach remains politically unthinkable in China. These examples underscore a critical point: Tackling demographic challenges requires genuine flexibility, a willingness to innovate, and the resolve to break

through deeply rooted systemic barriers. Whether Beijing can adapt these lessons to its own unique context remains an open question.

Xi's rhetoric about a "high-quality population" acknowledges the need for change but stops short of embracing the systemic reforms necessary to achieve it. Empowering households, redistributing resources to bridge regional divides, and fostering the conditions for innovation would require a profound recalibration of Xi's governance philosophy. His personal reluctance to loosen the reins of power continues to constrain the state's capacity to respond effectively to the pressures of an aging society.

### India's history of providing refuge – and why Sheikh Hasina poses a unique challenge

28 November 2024, [News Laundry](#), Nirupama Subramanian

Delhi didn't face demands to extradite the Dalai Lama or Varatharaja Perumal, so this is new terrain with unknown consequences.

On August 5, Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka and landed at Ghaziabad's Hindon airbase after her ouster as prime minister of Bangladesh. Dramatic as it was, she was not the first high-profile political leader from India's neighbourhood to seek safe haven. In 1959, India suffered consequences with China over the arrival of the Dalai Lama, fraying an already fragile bilateral relationship and contributing to tensions ahead of the 1962 war.

Hasina's presence does not pose such dire challenges, but she's unique in a way that India's other guests in exile are not. Other than the special history that India and Bangladesh share, the former prime minister is the only exile in India who was completely in charge of her domain until the moment she fled. For this reason, she's the only one that the home country wants back, and urgently, opening up potential legal complications to her stay in India.

Even with India's history of providing refuge, extradition is a new angle that Delhi has never faced before with its other guests.

#### Delhi and Dhaka want different things

Complicating the Hasina matter is the [arrest](#) this week of Chinmoy Krishna Das, a Hindu priest in Bangladesh, on charges of sedition. India strongly expressed its concern over his arrest and the denial of bail to him, an indication that Delhi and Dhaka are now at that stage of talking past each other in the downward spiral of bilateral relations.

Delhi, where the rank communalism of its own leadership does not do India proud, wants to keep the focus on the vulnerability of the Hindu minority in Bangladesh. Dhaka's attention is on Hasina, who is

wanted back to stand trial on charges of murder and corruption.

A spokesperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party [described](#) the former prime minister as “the most wanted person in Bangladesh” for the alleged killings of students in police firings during the uprising against her, for enforced disappearances under her watch as prime minister, and for alleged corruption. According to Bangladesh’s health ministry, over 1,000 people were killed during the uprising this year. A students’ body has compiled a list of over 1,500 deaths and more than 30,000 injured.

Meanwhile, a special tribunal – set up by Hasina a decade ago to try collaborators with the Pakistan army in the 1971 war on charges of genocide and other war crimes – has now been turned against its creator. The so-called International Crimes Tribunal, which convicted several Jamat-e-Islami leaders, leading to the execution of four of them, has now been repurposed to try Hasina for the deaths of hundreds of protesters shot dead by security forces during the uprising. The tribunal asked the international police organisation Interpol to issue a red notice for her arrest.

The tribunal also filed more than 60 complaints against Hasina, members of her Awami League party, and security officials, accusing them of forced disappearances, murder and even genocide. In September, it issued arrest warrants for Hasina and several others, and asked the Yunus-headed interim dispensation to produce them before the tribunal by mid-November. That date has passed.

Earlier this month, Bangladesh Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus said his government would seek her extradition under the India-Bangladesh extradition treaty. Yunus told [The Hindu](#) in an interview that if India refuses to extradite Hasina, it would be a violation of the treaty “that will not make a very happy relationship between us”. It would not be forgiven by any future government either, he said.

#### **The consequences of ‘safe haven’ to Dalai Lama**

Extradition is a new worry for India.

In 1959, the Dalai Lama was independent India’s first VIP political refugee. When he landed in Chuthangmu, in what was then the North East Frontier Agency, on March 31 that year, India’s relationship with China was already fraying.

Peking reacted angrily, screaming and shouting that Delhi had “expansionist” designs. It also [railed](#) against “Tibetan rebels” for having their “faces turned towards India and their backs to their motherland”. It was alleged that the Dalai Lama was a prisoner of these “rebels” who, in collusion with India, were coercing him into making statements about “independent” Tibet.

But China, though angered at the high international visibility that India had provided to the Dalai Lama,

made no demands that Delhi send him back. Instead, Delhi’s problems were of a different order. India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had already recognised Tibet as part of China through the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement. In a [one-on-one with the Dalai Lama](#), who was then only 24 years old, he conveyed that India’s “capacity to help is very limited and the moment we try to extend it, it would stop even that capacity”.

Almost like a father speaking to a young son, Nehru put it plainly: “Physically it is not possible to fight on behalf of Tibet. Even such a suggestion will harm them [the Tibetans] and their cause. Sympathy at present for Tibet cannot be converted into help by any country. DL should be under no illusion and, therefore, should fashion his policy with reference to actuality.”

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In even starker language, he said: “Let us face facts...The whole world cannot bring freedom to Tibet unless the whole fabric of the Chinese state is destroyed. USA, UK and others or anybody else cannot do this at present. DL should realise that in the present context Tibet’s independence would mean the complete break-up of the Chinese state and it is not possible to envisage it as likely to happen. To defeat China is not easy. Only a world war, an atomic war can perhaps be the precursor of such possibility. Can one start a world war? Can India start a world war? Let us talk of the present and not of the future and be more realistic.”

Nehru then asked the Dalai Lama how the Tibetans could resist China’s overwhelming military superiority. “One should, therefore, not close the doors of settlement; otherwise, it becomes a fight to the death”. India would not recognise a Tibetan government in exile, the Dalai Lama was told.

Yet Chairman Mao was [convinced](#) India was “doing bad things in Tibet” and decided he would give it “enough rope to hang itself”.

For large sections of India’s polity, Nehru had blundered by not pushing the Tibet card against China. However, as journalist Ananth Krishnan pointed out in his book *India’s China Challenge*, Chinese suspicions about Indian intentions in Tibet were as important as India’s forward policy of 1961 in China’s decision to attack India.

The Dalai Lama has lived in India ever since his arrival more than six decades ago, making McLeodganj in Himachal Pradesh’s Dharamshala district his permanent abode in exile. More than one lakh Tibetans now live in settlements across India. By the

time India began normalising ties with China in the late 1970s, the Dalai Lama's own views on independence changed. In 2005, he [declared](#) that Tibet was part of China and sought autonomy, not independence – a view he has restated several times since then.

As for India-China bilateral relations, India's safe haven to the Dalai Lama has not figured much, except when Beijing objects to some of his activities, which it views as "splittist", such as his visits to Arunachal, all of which China claims as south Tibet.

### **Fleeing the LTTE and Sri Lanka**

India's other high-profile exile, who's lived here since 1990, is Annamalai Varatharaja Perumal.

Perumal was the chief minister of Sri Lanka's North-East Provincial Council, a tragically short-lived experiment at India's behest. Through the 1987 Indo-Sri Lanka Accord and the 13th Amendment, it aimed at devolution of power to the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka. But it was jointly sabotaged by President Ranasinghe Premadasa and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Premadasa refused to transfer even the smallest power to the northeast government, instead making a deal with the LTTE, arming them to fight the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

Perumal's situation worsened when the new VP Singh government decided to withdraw the IPKF from Sri Lanka. The last Indian troops were scheduled to leave by March 31, 1990. Perumal saw his protective umbrella vanishing. So, on March 1, he made a last-ditch attempt to assert himself. He moved a resolution converting his provincial council into a constituent state assembly that would draft a constitution of the "Eelam Democratic Republic". He said this would take effect from March 1, 1991 if Colombo had not agreed to his demands by then.

It was a de facto "unilateral declaration of independence".

Delhi was horrified, but did not abandon Perumal to his fate. Within hours, Perumal, his wife and three daughters were bundled into an Indian Research & Analysis Wing plane and flown to Mauritius. More than 200 cadres of the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front were evacuated to India in Indian Air Force planes.

In June 1990, Perumal arrived in Mumbai, only to discover that the LTTE had wiped out the top leadership of the EPRLF, gunning them down in their rented apartment in Chennai. Perumal was moved to Lakshadweep for his safety. In August, he and his family were taken to Madhya Pradesh, to a tightly guarded and barricaded hunting lodge in Chanderi belonging to the Scindia family.

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Liberation Front were evacuated to India in Indian Air Force planes.

In May 1991, after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, Perumal and his family moved to a government bungalow in Ajmer's Civil Lines area. They lived there for a dozen years. There were no demands from Sri Lanka for his return. In the mid-1990s, he spent some months in Kathmandu dodging assassins sent by Prabhakaran. Towards the end of the decade, he went back to Sri Lanka to test the waters when then President Chandrika Kumaratunga seemed determined to bring about a political resolution to the Tamil question. But the 2002 ceasefire, which empowered the LTTE, alarmed him and he withdrew to India once again.

Perumal moved to Tamil Nadu. In 2008, a year before the LTTE was routed militarily, the state police uncovered, just in the nick of time, a plot to kill him and his family. He presently lives in Coimbatore.

### **What does the post-Hasina era hold?**

Sheikh Hasina has been exiled in Delhi before. On August 15, 1975, her father Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and members of her family were assassinated in Dhaka. Hasina, her husband, two children and sister were the only family members to escape as they were abroad. She led a low-profile life, working part-time at All India Radio, with a small circle of friends that notably included Pranab Mukherjee and his family.

In 1981, at the persuasion of her late father's friends, she returned to Dhaka and plunged into politics taking over as the leader of the Awami League, her father's political vehicle.

This time, the 77-year-old, who is reported to have moved into Lutyens Delhi from her transit accommodation at Hindon airbase, is unlikely to go back for another shot at power. And India is unlikely to yield to pressure from Dhaka and abandon her.

Unlike the Dalai Lama, who could hardly take on the Chinese military in Tibet, or Perumal, who stood little chance of surviving the LTTE in north-east Sri Lanka, Hasina is a different category of exile. In full control as prime minister for 15 years, she did for Delhi what no other leader could have done. She secured India's borders from Islamists and north-eastern military groups, and made the Hindu minority feel safe.

And it's her proximity to Delhi, and to the Modi government for two of her three terms, that appears to have been one of the reasons for her downfall. Keeping her here is as important to India as having her back in Bangladesh is for her opponents. In the post-Hasina era, India's relations with Bangladesh will, in the near term, depend on whether Dhaka can move past the demand for the return of Hasina, and if Delhi can look at ties beyond the alleged persecution of Hindus in Bangladesh. Neither of these issues can serve to bring relations back to even keel. Perhaps that is no longer the goal for either country.



## The Perseverance of an Independent Tibetan School: The 30-Year Journey of Jigme Gyaltsen Ethnic Vocational School

27 November 2024, [CTA](#)

**In July 2024, Jigme Gyaltsen Ethnic Vocational High School, which had operated independently for 30 years, announced its closure. Known as the best Tibetan-language educational institution and a private welfare school in the greater Tibetan region, it has now come to an end. The author of this article once served as an IT technician at the school, handling numerous digital archives and witnessing the establishment, struggles, development, and eventual forced closure of this institution on this land. Now living overseas, the author learned of the school's shutdown. However, due to censorship, former colleagues and Tibetan friends could not convey their sorrow. The author took up the pen to write this detailed recollection.**

*-by gingerduan.substack.com, 26 November 2024*

The original manuscript was published in Chinese on Mangmang: 一所独立藏语民族学校的坚守与落幕——吉美坚赞民族职业学校的30年

On July 14, 2024, in Golog Prefecture, Qinghai Province, the esteemed monk of Ragya Monastery and renowned educator Jigme Gyaltsen announced via a bilingual Tibetan-Chinese post on WeChat that the independently operated Jigme Gyaltsen Ethnic Vocational High School, which he founded, would be closing down after 30 years. The school had long offered free admission to students from farming and herding communities across the Tibetan regions of five provinces. It was regarded as one of the finest Tibetan-language educational institutions in the Greater Tibetan Area. This legendary private welfare school on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau has thus come to an end. The announcement emphasized that the closure was not due to the will of any individual or organization. Still, it was based on the national standards for vocational schools and relevant directives from the Qinghai Provincial Committee.

Some have commented that “black snow” has fallen over the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, extinguishing a beacon for the Tibetan people.

Ragya Town, a small settlement along the Yellow River in Golog Prefecture, Qinghai Province, is home to this iconic institution. Here, when locals say “the school,” everyone knows it refers to this one—it feels like there is only one school in Ragya. Between Ragya Town and the school lies the mountain “Ani Qungong,” meaning “Great Roc Spreading Its Wings,” at the foot of the mountain stands Ragya Monastery, the first monastery on the Yellow River. I will use “Ragya School” in the following text to refer to Jigme Gyaltsen Ethic Vocational High School.

From 2018 to 2019, I briefly worked as a network technician at this school. While there, I became deeply immersed in its environment and worked closely with many digital archives. I witnessed Ragya School's founding, struggles, development, and eventual forced closure on this land through this. I witnessed its rise and fall, its joys and sorrows.

This school was called the “Harvard of the Tibetan people,” its forced closure carries profound significance for the entire Tibetan region. Now, living overseas, I learned of the school's shutdown. I saw my Tibetan friends on social media drowning in tears, yet unable to express their grief in their native language due to censorship on social media like WeChat.

I deeply feel a connection between myself and this distant school, and the sorrowful cries from afar resonate with me. Since I am overseas, I decided to write it all down.

01 A Fusion of Tradition and Modernity: An Educational Experiment

Jigme Gyaltsen (hereafter referred to as “the Principal”) was a monk from Golog who founded Ragya School in 1994. It was the first private welfare school in Qinghai Province and a pioneering educational reform in Tibetan regions at the time.

Traditional Tibetan society primarily relied on monastic education. For both men and women, becoming a monk or nun and going to a monastery was often the only way to receive an education. Monasteries had a comprehensive education system comparable to modern primary and secondary schools, with various degrees and certifications. For example, the *Geshe* degree is akin to a doctorate in Tibetan Buddhism. Families would willingly support their children's monastic studies by providing food, clothing, and pocket money. In Tibet, monasteries functioned as more than just schools; they also served as welfare organizations, banks, hospitals, and academic institutions.

The Principal, who had received higher education, graduated from the Advanced Buddhist Institute founded by the Panchen Lama in Beijing before deciding to return to his hometown. At that time, Amdo Tibet was underdeveloped and lacked educational resources. Traditional monks were unfamiliar with modern knowledge and skills such as law, Mandarin, or computer science and had no place to learn them. Meanwhile, Tibetan children from nomadic families, due to their traditional pastoral lifestyle, had limited access to education. For example, in 2020, a Tibetan herdsman named Tenzing Tsondu (DingZhen) became an internet sensation in China because of his handsome appearance. After achieving fame as a livestreamer with millions of fans, he was revealed to be illiterate in Chinese. This wasn't unusual in traditional Tibetan society, as herding on the grasslands didn't require literacy.

To promote modern education in Tibet, the Principal combined the traditional monastic education system with the modern school system to create a unique integrated model that admitted both monks and lay students of all ages. Since pastoral families in Tibetan areas don't face the same academic or employment pressures as in mainland China, it was common to see young teenagers studying alongside older herdsman with beards who had spent the past decade tending sheep in the same classroom. Ragya School placed no restrictions on age, religious status, or sect. Even students who were completely illiterate at the time of admission were treated equally. They lined up to register and were placed in classes according to their level of Tibetan literacy.

As a welfare school, Ragya School adhered to the principle of "education for all without discrimination." Each year, the school enrolls about 200 students; sometimes, even the principal's relatives have to wait in line for three years before being admitted. Priority was given to orphans, dropouts, overage youth, and young monks from poor rural and nomadic families. The school even accepted Mongolian, Han, and other ethnic students and tulkus from various regions.

Once admitted, students were provided with free tuition, meals, and accommodation. The school's curriculum was rooted in the traditional Tibetan "Ten Sciences" while incorporating modern scientific knowledge. The school includes a junior high school and a senior high school. The junior high school offered foundational courses such as basic Tibetan, Mandarin, and mathematics, while the senior high school evolved into a vocational high school with seven specialized programs tailored to Tibetan culture: Tibetan medicine, advanced Tibetan studies, computer applications, tourism, English, arts and crafts (Thangka painting), film production, and alpine guiding. Most of these programs were developed as school-based curricula with published textbooks.

The school accommodated more than 1,000 students, ranging in age from 6 to 42, with about one-third being monks. Students came from farming and herding regions across Qinghai, Tibet, Sichuan, Gansu, Inner Mongolia, and beyond.

#### 02 Difficult Start-up, Unique Operational Methods

The establishment of the school was initially very difficult, lacking resources in many ways: funding, policies, teachers, and construction were all challenges. The principal was neither a Rinpoche nor a distinguished eminent monk. When the school was founded, he only had 3,000 yuan in deposit. He had to travel extensively, seeking loans and resources, hoping to persuade people to support his endeavor. Eventually, he gained the support of Rinpoche from various monasteries and the then-governor of Golog Prefecture. After many twists and turns, he secured

land and obtained the government's approval to open the school.

When the school was first established, the campus was built with the help of the nine students who initially enrolled. At that time, the students and teachers had no accommodation and had to live at the Ragya Monastery. During winter weekends, they would go to nearby mountains to gather branches and yak dung to keep the stoves burning for warmth. Local villagers, monks from Ragya monastery, and the school's students worked together, using bags to carry soil and level the ground to create the sports field. They also felled trees to construct the first school buildings.

In a documentary about the school's history, I saw how the wood for the early buildings was sourced. The students were allocated into three groups: the first group felled trees upstream of the Yellow River; the second group floated the logs down the river to Ragya; and the third group retrieved the wood from the shallow banks of the Yellow River near the school. This was how many of the school's early buildings were constructed.

Principal Jigme Gyaltzen was an educator and an entrepreneur. The school initially maintained its independence through funding provided by the "Snowland Treasures" dairy company (hereafter referred to as the Dairy Factory), which he established. The factory's early techniques were learned from two Europeans, and its dairy products were initially exported overseas. The dairy business provided income for herders and all its profits were used to cover the school's expenses, allowing it to offer free education and boarding for students and pay staff salaries.

By the time I had just graduated from university and began to engage with the operations of social organizations, I was amazed at how the principal, who had spent years on the plateau, learned and established such a progressive concept of "social enterprise." By using this advanced model, he promoted sustainable development in pastoral regions.

Later, however, the export channels for the dairy factory's products faced issues, and the products could no longer be sold overseas, leaving the domestic market as the only option. Over time, the factory's efficiency declined, and the principal had to seek funding from other sources. Given the influence of Ragya School and the principal's reputation, fundraising was not initially difficult. At that time, various social sectors and local governments were eager to provide resources to the school: The Hong Kong Jockey Club funded the construction of modern school buildings. The Trace Foundation supported several school expenses. Beijing Blue Charity Foundation donated many books to the school library.

Government subsidies were provided to impoverished students for living expenses.

However, transferring donations to the school's accounts became more difficult due to increasingly restrictive government regulations and policies. Overseas funds were no longer accepted, and even domestic funds could not be accessed. Gradually, the school began to experience financial difficulties. Before it closed, it was said that the school had gone three years without paying regular salaries.

The teachers' salaries had never been high to begin with, and when the financial issues arose, the school stopped paying the salaries of monastic teachers. Since the monks don't have families to support, the school provided their meals and accommodations, and their families could provide tiny allowances for personal expenses. However, lay teachers, who had families to support, found it much harder to cope. Many had no choice but to leave the school.

One teacher, who had studied at a university on the mainland, told me that working at Ragya school was a social service but not a service without an end. After serving for some time, one had to leave—continuing serving was not sustainable.

In October 2018, the Trace Foundation issued an open letter announcing its gradual cessation of most activities in Tibetan areas of China, citing fundamental changes in conditions on the Tibetan Plateau for an overseas foundation. The Trace Foundation, headquartered in New York, funds and supports community and educational initiatives in Tibet. Many private Tibetan-language schools, including Ragya School, have received their support.

At the time, I was in China and completely unaware of this significant change. I had only heard sporadically that introducing China's Foreign NGO Law had made it difficult for foreign donors to fund initiatives like ours. Back in the day, my knowledge of Tibet was very limited, and I didn't know where to find reliable research materials to learn. Our projects run by our organization in Tibetan areas also faced challenges: we struggled to find full-time teachers willing to work on the Tibetan Plateau and secure funding partners interested in supporting this project.

As a recent college graduate on a short-term network technician assignment, I was just beginning my journey on this plateau. My responsibilities were to consolidate and transform the outcomes of earlier projects and wind down some of the initiatives. [Click here](#) to read more.

## China: Human rights defenders criminalised as well as face harassment, surveillance and transnational repression

27 November 2024, [Monitor Civicus](#), Zhang Zhan

Civic space in China is rated as 'closed' by the CIVICUS Monitor. China's authoritarian state ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has systemically repressed fundamental freedoms. Human rights defenders and activists report harassment and intimidation; unfair trials; arbitrary, incommunicado and lengthy detentions; and torture and other ill-treatment for exercising their fundamental rights. Protests do occur but are quickly repressed, and critical civil society groups have been shut down.

August 2024 marked two years since the UN released a report determining the possible commission of 'crimes against humanity' against Uyghurs and other Muslim peoples by Chinese authorities. The Office of the High Commission on Human Rights (OHCHR) said that "many problematic laws and policies remain in place" and that allegations of human rights violations, including torture, must be "fully investigated". The Office also called for a "full review" with a human rights emphasis of the legal frameworks governing Chinese policies related to national security, counter-terrorism and minority rights.

Civil society groups called on the High Commissioner to "hold regular and substantive briefings with victims, survivors, and their representatives, and establish a mechanism to locate and free missing and wrongfully detained family members."

In October 2024, the European Parliament passed an emergency resolution condemning the Chinese government's persecution of Uyghurs and urging China to immediately and unconditionally release detainees, including Uyghur economist Ilham Tohti and Gulshan Abbas. The resolution, which was adopted by a vote of 540 in favour, 23 against and 47 abstentions, strongly condemned China's "repression and targeting of Uyghurs with abusive policies, including intense surveillance, forced labor, sterilisation, birth prevention measures and the destruction of Uyghur identity, which amount to crimes against humanity and a serious risk of genocide."

In recent months, the authorities have detained human rights defenders including Zhang Zhan, Tibetan activist Tashi Wangchuk and artist Gao Zhen, and convicted Yu Wensheng and Xu Yan for their activism. There has also been surveillance and harassment of bloggers and activists and transnational repression of critics in Japan. A protest in Shanghai by factory workers was also documented.

### Association

### Re-detention of woman human rights defender Zhang Zhan

Citizen journalist and activist Zhang Zhan was re-detained in September 2024, less than four months after being freed from prison. On 26th November 2024, it was reported that she had been formally arrested on charges of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble", an overly broad provision which is weaponized to target, intimidate and harass human rights defenders, activists, journalists and dissidents. According to Amnesty International, Zhang Zhan, who is being held at the Pudong New District Detention Center in Shanghai, appears to have been targeted because she has continued to advocate for human rights since her release from jail in May 2024.

Following her release, Zhang Zhan expressed concern that her online speech was being monitored by authorities. She was regularly and repeatedly taken in for police questioning in August 2024, with some interrogations lasting over 10 hours.

As previously documented, Zhang Zhan has been vocal against human rights violations and suppression of dissent in China. She has used her legal training and knowledge to help other human rights defenders to claim their rights through legal channels. In February 2020, Zhang Zhan visited Wuhan city in Hubei province of China to report on the COVID-19 outbreak from the ground. She went missing in Wuhan in May 2020. It later emerged that she had been taken by the Chinese authorities and detained in Shanghai. In December 2020, a court convicted her of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" after a sham trial and sentenced her to four years in prison.

#### Human rights defenders Yu Wensheng and Xu Yan convicted



Mary Lawlor UN Special Rapporteur HRDs  
@MaryLawlorhrds · Follow



V disappointed that Yu Wensheng & Xu Yan have received jail sentences, after being detained on way to meeting at EU Del. I wrote to govt earlier this year on the case. For all #China's talk of value it places on rule of law & human rights, day after day its actions show otherwise



3:49 PM · Nov 5, 2024

23 Reply Copy link

Read 2 replies

On 29th October 2024, the Suzhou Intermediate Court in Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, convicted human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng and woman human rights defender Xu Yan for "inciting subversion of State power". Yu Wensheng was sentenced to three years in prison while Xu Yan was sentenced to one year and nine months in prison. Yu and Xu were detained by police in April 2023 while on their way to meet with high-level European officials visiting China.

Yu Wensheng is a human rights lawyer based in Beijing. He has represented cases of victims of China's crackdowns on petitioners, civil rights activists, and his fellow human rights lawyers. Yu Wensheng has also used his legal skills to advocate for reform in multiple sectors of Chinese society. He previously served a four-year sentence from 2018 to 2022 after being convicted for "inciting subversion of state power".

Xu Yan is a woman human rights defender who campaigned for the release of Yu Wensheng, to whom she is married, as well as for other human rights defenders and their family members who face harassment, surveillance, and arbitrary detention.

#### Transnational repression of critics in Japan

Chinese authorities have been trying to intimidate people from China living in Japan who take part in activities critical of the Chinese government.

According to Human Rights Watch, the Chinese government's harassment of people from China, including those from Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, and their family members back home, appears aimed at deterring members of the diaspora from protesting against the government or engaging in events deemed politically sensitive. The Chinese authorities have also sought out diaspora members to provide information on others in Japan.

Between June and August 2024, Human Rights Watch interviewed 25 people from Hong Kong and mainland China, including from Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia, who were living in Japan. All had been involved in peaceful activities that the Chinese Communist Party deems unfavourable or threatening to one-party rule, such as holding public events to raise awareness about crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, promoting Tibetan culture, or having a reading club discuss a book by an activist from Inner Mongolia.

China conducts the most sophisticated, global, and comprehensive campaign of transnational repression in the world. Freedom House's conservative catalogue of direct, physical attacks since 2014 covers 214 cases originating from China, far more than any other country.

#### Tibetan language rights activists under surveillance after release from detention





Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk was detained for 15 days on October 20 over social media posts supporting fair trials and criticising Government actions, such as removing Tibetan prayer flags and closing Tibetan schools.

Full story here [🔗](#) [📄](#)



freetibet.org  
Former political prisoner detained for social media posts  
Tibetan language activist Tashi Wangchuk was detained for 15 days.

Last edited 12:36 AM · Nov 15, 2024

51 Reply Copy link

Read 3 replies

Prominent Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk was detained for 15 days on charges of ‘disrupting social order’ and allegedly spreading false information on social media, and has been under strict surveillance.

According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), Wangchuk, 39, was arrested by the Internet Police Unit in China’s Qinghai province on 20th October 2024. After an investigation, he was detained for 15 days in the Yulshul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture until his release on 4th November 2024.

He was accused of posting “false information” on social media platforms since June 2024, for “repeatedly insulting and ridiculing government departments” and “negatively impacting the online environment and public order in society” by allegedly distorting and rejecting government policies.

Wangchuk’s detention comes as China intensifies its policies to suppress — or even eradicate — Tibetan and other ethnic languages and cultures and replace them with Mandarin and Han Chinese customs.

**Surveillance and harassment of bloggers and activists**

The authorities have continued to monitor and harass activists and other individuals, both off and online, especially ahead of politically sensitive dates or major events.

In September 2024, The Guardian reported that China’s internet police went from targeting bloggers to their followers. In recent months, followers of influential liberal bloggers have been interviewed by police as China widens its net of online surveillance.

In the same month, authorities in Beijing stepped up security measures ahead of celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China on 1st October 2024, issuing restrictions on who may enter the city. Police have been following rights activists and lawyers, detaining their family members, or preventing them from entering Beijing. The moves form part of China's "stability maintenance" operations. One of the first to be targeted was Li Wenzu, the activist wife of prominent rights attorney Wang Quanzhang, who was detained on entering Beijing.

In October 2024, RFA reported that authorities across China targeted dissidents and petitioners ahead of a key meeting of the ruling Communist Party, placing them under house arrest or escorting them out of town on enforced "vacations." Among those targeted include political journalist Gao Yu, rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang and political commentator Zha Jianguo.

**Expression**

**Artist detained for 'insulting' Mao sculptures**



China's arrest of artist Gao Zhen and criminalization of his decades-old artwork under the Orwellian "Heroes and Martyrs Protection Law" is an outrage. ARC demands Gao Zhen's immediate and unconditional release and the return of his artwork.

[artistsatriskconnection.org/story/artists-...](https://artistsatriskconnection.org/story/artists-...)



10:01 PM · Sep 2, 2024

Dissident Chinese artist Gao Zhen was detained in August 2024 on suspicion of "insulting revolutionary heroes and martyrs."

The Gao Brothers are known for their provocative sculptures, which critique the founder of the People's Republic of China, Mao Zedong, and his regime. The Gao Brothers’ dissident artwork has been shown at many venues overseas, but not publicly displayed in China since they signed an open letter from dissident physicist Fang Lizhi to then supreme leader Deng



Xiaoping during the pro-democracy movement of 1989.

Gao Zhen left China in 2022 to live permanently in the United States but had been visiting family when he was taken by authorities in Hebei province. According to his brother, Chinese authorities stormed the brothers' art studio in Sanhe City on 26th August 2024 and confiscated several artworks.

Spoofing or insulting China's revolutionary "heroes and martyrs" was made a crime in 2021, as part of a newly amended criminal code, under a campaign by China's leader, Xi Jinping. It carries a penalty of up to three years' imprisonment.

### Peaceful Assembly

#### Shanghai factory workers block major highway



11月21日，上海七宝。因长期拖欠工资，逼迫工人辞职。国利公司的工人们走上沪淞公路堵路维权。之后警察开始对部分堵路工人进行驱散和抓捕。



Last edited 8:55 AM · Nov 21, 2024

3.7K Reply Copy link

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Hundreds of workers at an automotive trim company in Shanghai blocked a major highway in the city in November 2024 amid a protest over plans for mass layoffs.

The workers from the state-owned Shanghai Guoli Automotive Leather Decoration Co. scuffled with police as traffic backed up on the Husong Highway. Police detained at least one worker, prompting others to shout and join in the scuffle.

Employees have been protesting since receiving a notice on 9th October 2024 offering a payout of three months' minimum wage to anyone who volunteered to resign, amounting to a total of payment 8,070 yuan (USD 1,113).

Social media posts from people identifying themselves as workers from the company said the "voluntary resignations" weren't actually voluntary. They said they are entitled to three months' compensation based on their average wage over the previous 12 months.

Freedom House that monitors dissent in China noted that it has "documented a rise in protests over recent months by consumers and investors amidst a sluggish

economy." The majority of these protests are led by workers (41 percent).

### Nepal's China dilemma

27 November 2024, [The Kathmandu Post](#), Siddharta Thapa

China celebrated the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Republic of China in 1959. A Nepali delegation also visited the country to participate in the celebrations conducted by the Chinese Communist Party. Surya Bahadur Thapa, a minister in the interim government formed by King Mahendra, led the Nepali delegation.

At the end of Thapa's sojourn to China, his Chinese interlocutors informed him that Chairman Mao would grant him a meeting. Thapa was advised to carry three messages to King Mahendra. First, Mao informed Thapa that the Chinese were not in a race with India to provide developmental assistance to Nepal. Second, he assured that China would not let anyone compromise issues related to Nepal's sovereignty. Finally, Mao said that Thapa must advise the King to maintain good relations with India to ensure political stability in Nepal.

Leading a semi-retired life half a decade later, the octogenarian Thapa was curiously observing the evolving politics of the peace process, which marked a gargantuan shift in Nepali society. Pushpa Kamal Dahal had just resigned as prime minister over his failed attempt to depose the army chief in 2010. At this point, he seemed hellbent on soliciting China's support to return to power. After losing power, Dahal visited the northern neighbour with a plan to counter India. This was Dahal playing the China card in Nepali politics in the early phase of the peace process.

After returning to Nepal from his China visit in 2011, Dahal's trusted China hand Agni Sapkota declared China's prophetic advice to the visiting Maoist delegation: To mend ties with India for stability in Nepal. Thapa observed that great powers seldom change track at provocations insinuated by political frictions of Nepali leaders. He also witnessed that China had upheld its tested Nepal policy for over 50 years since different regimes in Nepal continued with their commitment to the One China Policy.

Interestingly, China's ambitious global outreach in recent times has compelled analysts to examine whether its policy is evolving towards deeper engagement in Nepal. For instance, many analysts have characterised the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a geopolitical initiative that aims to provide strategic leverage over other countries. BRI is a signature foreign policy of President Xi Jinping, which was announced in 2013 to connect China closer to the world through infrastructure and investment projects.

Unsurprisingly, Beijing would want Nepal to be a part of President Xi's ambitious foreign policy gambit. While Nepal signed the BRI Framework Agreement in 2017, Beijing is now pressing Kathmandu to move forward with the BRI implementation plan.

Given the heightened geopolitical rivalry, including in the SAARC region, the BRI implementation plan was bound to face scrutiny in Nepal. The fact that the document has not been made public and the details of the plan remain elusive gives way to rising speculations on the negative aspects of the proposed plan.

In a democracy, process and content fundamentally determine the course of bilateral or multilateral treaties. As in Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), the proposed implementation plan should have been made public to allow for debates, enhancing the understanding of the agreement. Also, the government, in the Parliament's absence, could have called an all-party meeting or referred the plan to the international committee of the Lower House of Parliament. MCC received bipartisan support since Nepal's parliament endorsed it after many rounds of deliberations and amendments. Therefore, as Nepal builds on its relationship with its neighbours, the political leadership in Kathmandu should provide space to open debates on the policy choices it intends to initiate. More importantly, Nepal must strive to achieve bipartisan support on critical issues impacting its external relations, especially with its neighbours.

As Nepal's economy struggles due to political instability, bilateral and multilateral funding will continue to play a pivotal role in fueling growth. However, there are genuine concerns regarding BRI that should be clarified. It is widely reported that BRI has led to unsustainable debt in several countries, and the bad debt incurred through its funded projects has seriously impacted their economies. Sri Lanka and Pakistan are perfect examples in the region, illustrating that large infrastructure projects with high interest rates plunge the economy into a crisis with high debt-to-GDP ratios. This situation leads to unsustainable levels, eventually producing a balance-of-payment deficit and a large-scale financial crisis that triggered protests in Sri Lanka.

Nepal must prudently select projects that it can repay, and the borrowing rates must be on par with what the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank Group offer for financing infrastructure projects in the country. In simple words, we must bite what we can chew in terms of envisioning big-ticket infrastructure projects that require enormous amounts of capital.

Another aspect of the implementation plan that was criticised was how the plan covers an entire range of areas of cooperation, including law enforcement and other areas unrelated to infrastructure development. Any imbalance in Nepal's foreign policy will be

watched closely by Nepal's friends on the global stage. Coincidentally, Donald Trump's NSC designate recently visited Kathmandu, which reinforces Nepal's geopolitical importance.

The BRI implementation plan, in its current speculated form, has broader strategic and geopolitical implications. There seems to be no clarity on the requirement of the plan for BRI projects, as countries worldwide haven't signed it. Therefore, the rationale for Nepal signing the agreement is largely questionable at this stage. At all costs, Nepal must avoid sending a signal that it has chosen a particular geopolitical camp.

Advocates of the implementation plan mention that this is only an in-principal document. If so, the political leadership of Nepal must evaluate that by conceding Nepal's principled position on seeking grants or concessional loans at the World Bank and the ADB rates. Observers will question the neutrality of the in-principal stand taken to endorse the document. Those opposing the plan in its present form will continue to argue that once a country loses on principle, what else is there to lose?

Nepali politicians and policymakers at the strategic level should realise Beijing has moved ahead from the traditional way of looking at Nepal. Nepal should assess whether China has shifted the goalpost and its commitments by introducing a non-essential implementation plan as one of its priorities—from a geopolitical perspective—and what it means for the country. Moreover, Kathmandu's position should be to seek the implementation of past announcements and promises. Lastly, Sino-Nepal relations are of historical importance, and therefore, they cannot be reduced to dividing political forces in Nepal. Nepali politicians need to improvise their foreign policy positioning by understanding that state-to-state relations are becoming more transactional and that each nation will aim to expand its leverage over the other. It is time an aspiring Nepali woke up to the reality of cutthroat competition for influence in international relations.

### **Why India needs to take its ties with China 'sincerely' & the inconvenience of US indictment of Adani**

27 November 2024, [The Print](#), Vandana Menon

Global media, however, acknowledges that India does indeed face a Chinese threat. It also notes that controversy surrounding Adani Group creates problems for India's own domestic growth.

When it comes to the Indian growth story, there are two things, according to global media, that are shaping it—Adani and China.

Let's take China first. Rather predictably, *Global Times* in an opinion says New Delhi needs to be taking India-China ties more sincerely. Doubts have arisen in China,

the piece says, about Indian sincerity towards improving its relationship because of India's tenuous current position in the West over issues like "democracy" and "human rights."

"Given India's previous inconsistencies in its policy toward China, these doubts are not without merit," the piece says. India needs to eliminate "erroneous concepts" like the need to counter China, or the inevitability of war.

It goes on to list three areas of improvement in India's policy towards China: domestic public opinion, an overemphasis on security and not on economic development, and barriers in people-to-people exchanges.

The writer of the op-ed is of the opinion that domestic public opinion is too skewed away from China, and the Indian establishment needs to be doing more to "properly guide rather than manipulate public sentiment when issues arise in bilateral relations". Think tanks and media outlets have "poisoned" public perception against China by creating a "China threat"—and that needs to change, apparently, because trade and economic cooperation should take precedence over issues of security. Never mind that there are actual border encroachments taking place—India needs to stop practicing "discriminatory economic and trade policies against China" as a way to get back at China.

"Actions speak louder than words," the op-ed generously concludes. "We hope that India will quickly take concrete and positive actions on various issues related to bilateral cooperation, truly working to thaw the relationship between China and India."

The *Wall Street Journal* offers another viewpoint—one in which India absolutely does have a Chinese threat to counter. If incoming American president Donald Trump makes good on his promise to levy high import tariffs on Chinese goods, then India stands to gain a lot: but first, it must "get out of the way of its factory owners."

In a report on how India has done very little to clear hurdles for labour-intensive manufacturing, the *WSJ* takes the example of the garment industry, in which India should have an edge. However, annual apparel exports have declined more than 11 percent compared to a decade ago. In the same time period, Bangladesh saw a growth of over 50 percent.

Bangladesh and Vietnam are the two top choices for the China+1 strategy as the Chinese share in global manufacturing exports declines. India doesn't even figure in the top 5, the *WSJ* reports.

The *WSJ* lands on stringent regulations as the cause for holding India back: it's keeping companies from expanding, apparently. The question of labour rights—and what the government is doing to protect them—is painted as a headache and the reason why India isn't

surging ahead of countries that seem to allow exploitative practices.

The piece does talk about how the Modi government planned to overhaul the labour code and loosen laws—including allowing firms employing upto 300 workers to fire workers without government permission—but says pushback from labour unions have stalled the process.

"Manufacturing firms in India said they are wary of operating large factories because of the power of organised labour," the piece says. Plus, "India's failure to sign free-trade agreements with other countries that would slash tariffs on its exports has also made Indian garments increasingly too expensive for global retail companies."

This has meant that Indian retailers and manufacturers have shifted production and sourcing to Bangladesh, leading to a jump in apparel imports. But manufacturers expect "Trump's election—and political unrest in Bangladesh which ousted its prime minister in August—to provide opportunities to larger apparel makers". India can still get ahead of China, if only it figures out its labour problems.

The spectre of Trump still lingers over India and China relationships. Academic Walter Russell Mead writes in the *WSJ* that "a strong U.S.-India relationship is both necessary and problematic. Only America can help India keep China on its own side of the border, but America is a difficult friend."

Mead visited Tawang as part of a delegation organised by the Hudson Institution on an invitation from the India Foundation, which is close to the BJP. It might be far-flung and remote, but Tawang is where "the promise and complexity of the U.S.-India relationship are easy to see", writes Mead.

The threat of Chinese incursion into the region has drawn India closer to the US. But religious tensions—like the major proselytising that Christian missionaries do in the region—and the difficulty of defending the northeast without access to Bangladeshi airspaces complicates things for India. An American hand is seen behind both: American ideas about religious freedom and accusations of America meddling in Bangladesh are both irritants in India.

"In New Delhi and Tawang, Indians mostly cheered Donald Trump's election. They hope he will give India the support against China it seeks without making a lot of noise about human rights," Mead writes. "We shall see."

Which brings us to Adani and the billionaire boys club, and the inconvenient timing of the American justice system investigating the Adani Group.

To start, the *Financial Times* has a story on Kenya's jubilation over cancelling the proposal for the Adani Group to expand its international airport and invest in its power sector.

“Kenya’s decision underlined the global ramifications for Adani’s companies after he was indicted for allegedly overseeing kickbacks to win business in India,” the *FT* reports.

The Adani Group’s expansion into Africa is seen as part and parcel of India’s geopolitical ambitions, but investing in Kenya was like kicking the hornet’s nest after massive protests against Adani’s involvement took over the country in July.

“Modi urged Indian corporates to become ‘multinational’ soon after taking office in 2014, although Adani has always denied receiving preferential treatment from the government. India sees opportunities for its companies from Africa’s natural resources and growing population,” the report says, listing Adani’s investments in other countries.

But the scandal also creates problems for India’s own domestic growth.

“The allegations validate foreign investor perceptions of the difficulty of doing business in India and how a few politically connected players can allegedly game the system,” *Bloomberg* says in its latest India Edition newsletter.

Foreign investors are warier than ever about fresh projects in India. It’s undeniable that India’s massive growth in the past 10 years has been supported by a “fivefold increase in infrastructure investments by the Modi government.” One of the best successes of this expansion program has been the solar energy sector, and *Bloomberg* believes that this sector will be impacted the most by the Adani bribery scandal.

“First, the solar sector’s bidding processes and economics will come under additional scrutiny now that US agencies have alleged that officials of Adani and Azure Power offered bribes to various state governments to purchase expensive power after having overbid to bag 12 GW projects from Solar Energy Corporation of India,” the piece says.

Second, the involvement of Canadian pension fund Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ)—a major investor in Azure Power—shows that even Western institutions are caught in the mess. Funds are likely to side-step India, even as markets in the US look exciting.

But keeping foreign investors back will also be hard: the government “will have to fix the reputational damage while protecting one of its so-called national champions.”

*Reuters* worries that Indian businesses will learn the wrong lessons from Adani. “Corruption’s long history in India explains the country’s failure to live up to its growth potential,” the editorial opens. “The danger, however, is that businesses learn the wrong lesson from the affair and grow warier of international capital markets rather than cleaning house.”

The problem, as *Reuters* sees it, is that corruption tends to “evolve” rather than disappear in fast-

growing economics. “The scandal shines a light on a reality that many global companies would rather ignore. India’s \$3.9 trillion economy, with its low \$2,700 GDP per capita, is full of promise but also a difficult place to do business, like many other developing markets,” the piece says.

And routing out corruption should attract more FDI, but instead, “authorities know that going after big targets in any crackdown could have a shorter-term economic hit.”

“Ultimately, Adani’s use of U.S. debt capital markets exposed him to the long arm of the Justice Department, which doesn’t mind ruffling feathers of Washington’s diplomatic friends and foes alike,” the piece concludes. “The message Indian tycoons are hearing loud and clear is clean up fast or curtail your international ambitions.”

### Is This Civilisation Finished?

27 November 2024, [Daily Sun](#), A K Ziauddin Ahmed

The Himalaya-Hindu Kush Mountains, along with the Tibetan Plateau, are often called the Third Pole after the Arctic and Antarctic, because of their huge ice reserves. Rivers originating in the Third Pole are a source of water for 40% of the world’s population, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India and Pakistan, according to Eos Scientific News published by the American Geophysical Union.

The importance of the region in global climate prompted China to launch the “Third Pole Climate Forum” in June 2024. Over the past several years, global warming has been melting the ice in the Third Pole at an alarming rate, causing flash floods, landslides and glacial lake outbursts in the region. Losses in terms of human lives, crops, livestock, homes, roads and other infrastructure are catastrophic.

It is now widely known that global warming and resultant climate change are a consequence of over 250 years of carbon emissions, largely from industrialised nations, since the mid-18th century.

However, the losses and damages due to climate change are suffered most by the developing countries since they lack the resources and technologies to mitigate them. The developing nations have long been asking for reparations from the developed nations but to no avail.

Finally, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP27 held in 2022, an agreement to provide funding for loss and damage to vulnerable nations was reached. As of January 2024, the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), as they named it, received ‘commitments’ for contributions amounting to \$661 million, UNDP reports. We may recall here that the losses incurred by Pakistan in 2022



for floods triggered by unusual rains and melting glaciers were estimated at over \$10 billion.

At COP15 in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2009, developed nations pledged climate finance of \$100 billion yearly by 2020 to aid developing countries combat climate change. Climate finance is different from the above-mentioned FRLD. It is intended to mitigate carbon emissions and make necessary preparations for adapting to climate change. This year COP29 was held in Baku, Azerbaijan, from November 11 to 22. A UN press release declares that a breakthrough agreement was reached in the conference that developing countries will now be provided with USD 300 billion annually as climate finance raising it from USD 100 billion. A great rise indeed.

Are these funds really coming in? Let's count from 2016, the year after the landmark Paris Agreement on climate change was adopted in COP21. The following table shows the amounts provided in climate finance funds by developed countries as published by OECD:

Is This Civilisation Finished?  
Although the contributions have consistently fallen below the commitments over the years, it is encouraging to see that they finally reached and even exceeded the \$100 billion target in 2022.

However, Oxfam International, the renowned NGO with a mission to end global poverty and injustice, disagrees. In its press release issued on 9 July 2024, the organisation asserts that the "true value" of climate finance is only around \$35 billion. This is because nearly 70% of the funds have actually been provided as loans, not grants, meaning poor countries will have to repay them with interest.

Nevertheless, the rich countries have at least agreed to establish a system for compensating poor countries for losses suffered due to climate change and helping them adapt by making financial contributions. The underlying moral is that these nations are taking responsibility for causing climate change by emitting billions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. At every COP, countries pledge to reduce carbon emissions to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels—the limit agreed upon in the Paris Agreement. Unfortunately, global carbon emissions rather increased in 2023 by more than 497 million tons compared to 2022. In fact, the rising trend of carbon emissions has persisted except during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

Is This Civilisation Finished?

Every year, COPs are organised with grandeur, drawing thousands of attendees, including heads of state and government, journalists and representatives from civil society, philanthropy and international organisations. Traditionally, countries engage in tough negotiations, and world leaders make pledges and commitments.

Meanwhile, carbon emissions continue to surge unabated.

In the USA, the second-largest carbon emitter in the world (having lost its first position to China in 2006), Donald Trump is back in the presidency. During his first term, Trump withdrew the US from the 2015 Paris Agreement. He has repeatedly called climate change a "hoax". So, the future outlook is even worse. Global carbon emissions will continue to rise, and at some point, global warming will cross the critical redline of no return. Therefore, as Rupert Read and Samuel Alexander contend in their book, "This civilisation is finished."

### Pakistan and China's diplomatic relations reach a low ebb

27 November 2024, [The Interpreter](#), Adnam Aamir



As if Pakistan's government wasn't under pressure enough – with thousands of protesters on the streets and the capital Islamabad in lockdown amid calls to release former prime minister Imran Khan – relations with neighbouring China are also going from bad to worse.

Beijing's growing anger over the safety of its citizens in Pakistan has been illustrated by a surprising diplomatic spat. "It is unacceptable for us to be attacked twice in only six months," declared China's ambassador in Islamabad Jiang Zaidong in an unusually direct response to comments made by a senior Pakistan politician seen to be downplaying the risk. "President Xi [Jinping] cares about Chinese people's security and puts people's lives first," Jiang went on to say. "He especially cares about the security of the Chinese people in Pakistan."

Tension has been growing after a string of attacks seen to be targeting Chinese nationals, particularly in Balochistan, the restive southwestern province, and elsewhere, too. Pakistani officials described the ambassador's comments as perplexing, given the positive diplomatic relations between both countries. Yet it was also the first time Pakistan and China have publicly exchanged blame, a significant departure



from their usual polite diplomatic exchanges, at least those in public.

**The prospect of Chinese “boots on the ground” is politically sensitive.**

An attack in the north of Pakistan left five Chinese engineers dead in March. Another attack killed two Chinese nationals working for a power company in the port town of Karachi in October, with a further two Chinese workers injured in a shooting in November. Yet China has been asking for stronger security measures for its nationals in Pakistan since at least 2022 as attacks continued to mount. The public outburst by China’s ambassador is illustrative of frustration at Pakistan’s failure to protect Chinese nationals.

But Pakistan’s reaction was baffling. As the junior partner, and in need of support from China for its economy, military and diplomacy, Pakistan still chose to react to the ambassador. This might be a sign of annoyance after China aggressively pushed to allow Chinese security personnel to guard Chinese nationals in Pakistan. When this demand was rejected by Pakistan, China sought to form joint security companies, where Chinese along with Pakistani personnel would protect Chinese nationals working in Pakistan. But the prospect of Chinese “boots on the ground” is politically sensitive.

The standoff has economic consequences. China is stalling funding for the first phase of the ML-1 railway project, a \$6.8 billion project to upgrade railway tracks in Pakistan. Pakistan can expect more delays until making a major concession to China on security. The mood could also sour Pakistan’s request to China to reprofile power debt worth \$15 billion in July, where it is still waiting on an answer. This delay will hurt the balance of payment situation in Pakistan, which must repay \$100 billion in external debt in the next four years.

Ultimately, there is a limit to which China will tolerate losing its nationals in Pakistan, and it’s clear that a threshold is being reached. If Pakistan doesn’t improve the security situation it seems likely Beijing will move to disengage with Islamabad, which would carry significant consequences for CPEC, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a \$50 billion component of the Belt and Road Initiative.

**China’s atrocity crimes in Xinjiang are entering an even darker phase. The UN must act.**

26 November 2024, [Atlantic Council](#), Rayhan Asat

While the world’s attention has turned to the devastating conflict in the Middle East, Russia’s ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and other global crises, the suffering of the Uyghur people in China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is accelerating. In late October, a Chinese state-run news

outlet released what it called a documentary but was in fact an atrocious propaganda video. In this video, two Uyghurs, Gulmira Imin and Zulpiqar Rozi, were forced to confess to a crime they almost certainly did not commit. Forced confessions are a routine tactic employed by the Chinese government against Uyghur political prisoners. Imin and Rozi had been detained in the aftermath of the July 5, 2009, Uyghur uprising, and for almost fifteen years it was not known what had happened to these political prisoners. As a more well-known political prisoner, Gulmira is listed as a prisoner of conscience by the US Congress’s Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. Then suddenly, they appeared on camera, ostensibly blaming outside forces for the Chinese government-manufactured human rights violations that resulted in the student-led uprising. The years of torture they had endured since they were detained were visible on their faces, hair, and teeth due to the horrific conditions in the camps.

This video is just the latest example of the Chinese government’s brutal treatment of Uyghurs. My colleague Alyssa Johnson and I have prepared a forthcoming report to the United Nations (UN) documenting an array of horrors, including deaths, torture, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, and the newly imposed illegal financial penalties on prisoners’ families as a form of extortion. Our report also details forced labor, transnational repression, continuous violations of reproductive rights, and assaults against human rights defenders, among other offenses. Our work bears witness to the dark history unfolding in our time.

When atrocities persist, they risk becoming tragedies that the world feels powerless to change.

In the face of genocide and grave human rights violations, the Uyghur people have demonstrated extraordinary courage, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to peace. From the brave survivors to families of those who fell victim to the camps, the Uyghur community stands as a testament to grace and unity in the most trying of times. Yet, despite their strength, the global community and the UN system have failed to protect them.

For nearly a decade, Uyghur advocates, myself included, have pushed the UN and governments across the world to address China’s crimes against humanity and genocide against the Uyghur people. After two years of engaging with China on its terms, on August 27 of this year, Volker Türk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, issued an update on the ongoing human rights crisis in Xinjiang. The update merely confirmed what was already known—that despite requests from the UN, the Chinese government has refused to allow authorities any meaningful access to the region. This statement builds on the 2022 landmark report by the Office of the UN

High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which alleged that Chinese government policies targeting the Uyghurs and other Turkic peoples in Xinjiang may amount to crimes against humanity. The recommendations made in this report urged China to engage with and facilitate further visits by the OHCHR. However, in subsequent engagements with the UN and member states, the Chinese government has presented a deceitful image of its policies in Xinjiang, deliberately concealing the atrocity-torn region where Uyghurs and other ethnic groups remain in mass incarceration.

Today, after nearly nine years since China initiated its policy of mass detention of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, Beijing's atrocities against the Uyghur people have entered an even darker phase. China is further escalating the use of its authoritarian penal system to imprison people, with at least half a million Uyghurs imprisoned as of 2022, according to the Chinese government's own data (with 2022, 2023, and 2024 data missing due to public scrutiny indicating that the real numbers are much higher). In an August report that I co-authored with Min Kim for the Yale Genocide Studies Program, we conducted a statistical analysis of Uyghur imprisonment rates based on the Chinese government's own data. Despite Uyghurs comprising less than 1 percent of China's population, they account for 34 percent of the country's incarcerations, marking the world's highest rate of ethnic imprisonment. Our analysis estimates that, if left unchecked, China's atrocities will strip 4.4 million years of life from my proud community.

An investigation by researcher Nyrola Elimä and journalist Ben Mauk, published in the *New York Times* in November, uncovered the alarming extent of China's international reach, as it targets Uyghurs who have fled its oppressive regime. In cooperation with Thai authorities, the Chinese government has forcibly repatriated—in overt violation of international law—hundreds of Uyghurs who sought asylum in Thailand. The UN Refugee Commission failed them after their brave escape. Dozens died. Today, more than sixty Uyghurs remain detained in Thailand under dire conditions, awaiting an uncertain fate.

This situation calls for urgent international attention and action, as reports coming out of camps in Xinjiang are increasingly alarming. One such example is the Netherlands-based Uyghur activist Abdurehim Gheni, whose brothers, niece, and dozens of other relatives are in the camps. The Chinese government temporarily released Abdurehim's father, Abdugheni Hudaberdi, to pressure him into refraining from testifying at an international tribunal hearing examining China's human rights violations. When Abdurehim refused to comply with their request, his father was taken back to the camp, where he tragically passed away two months later in government custody.

There is a saying in Uyghur that when someone passes away before they can see someone who they longed for, the person leaves this world with their eyes wide open. Abdurehim's father left this world with his eyes open.



*Abdurehim Gheni holds a poster of his father, Abdugheni Hudaberdi, on July 29, 2024, in Amsterdam during a protest against the Chinese government's brutal policies in the Uyghur homeland. (Photo courtesy of Abdurehim Gheni.)*

When thinking about such cases, my brother, Ekpar Asat—an award-winning entrepreneur and alumnus of the US State Department's exchange program—comes to mind. He has been unjustly imprisoned for eight years and eight months. I can hardly fathom what he endures each second in that prison. But Ekpar is not alone; there are countless others like him languishing in those cells. This reality leaves me, and others who care about the Uyghurs, no room to dwell in pain—we must channel it into action.

When atrocities persist, they risk becoming tragedies that the world feels powerless to change. But the Chinese government's crimes against the Uyghurs are not just tragic facts—they are deliberate acts of ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and genocide. The world cannot remain passive. Above all, the UN has a responsibility to act on the recommendations it has put forward and to demand accountability.

The United States, too, will have a major role to play in ensuring accountability for China's crimes against the Uyghur people. As the incoming US administration assembles its team of experts on China, I hope that the plight of Uyghurs will be placed at the center of US diplomacy with Beijing. At the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Lima, Peru, last week, Chinese leader Xi Jinping outlined four red lines for the United States, one of which was democracy and human rights—a pointed message to the incoming Trump administration not to press Beijing on these issues. The United States must respond decisively: These red lines for Xi are the foundations of the United States' core values that define its global leadership. Along with more decisive action from the UN, US leadership and initiative on China's human rights violations against the Uyghur people will be essential to hold Beijing accountable for its crimes.

## Google blocked 1,000-plus pro-China fake news websites from its search results

25 November 2024, [The Register](#), Laura Dobberstein

Beijing's propaganda buddies aren't just using social media.

Google's Threat Intelligence Group has blocked a network China-related firms from its search results for operating fake news services and websites.

"Collectively these firms bulk-create and operate hundreds of domains that pose as independent news websites from dozens of countries, but are in fact publishing thematically similar, inauthentic content that emphasizes narratives aligned to the political interests of the People's Republic of China (PRC)," declared Google.

It's named the network "Glassbridge" and asserted it's comprised of entities operating in concert while pretending to be independent.

While Google could not confirm the leadership of Glassbridge, it assessed that the four entities – Shanghai Haixun Technology, Times Newswire, Durinbridge, and Shenzhen Bowen Media – were taking direction from a shared customer outsourcing the creation and distribution of pro-PRC content.

That content included regurgitated state sponsored media, press releases and other material. When it appeared online, it often did so mixed alongside more innocuous content, as well as conspiracy theories or *ad hominem* attacks on specific individuals.

The actors behind the campaign used digital PR firms, a ploy Google feels gave the operation plausible deniability, and could obscure the true source's role in the "dissemination of coordinated inauthentic content."

The most prolific of the four entities was Shanghai Haixun Technology. It had 600 domains that Google removed from its news search feature, and a number of YouTube channels that were also terminated. The group has been operating for a while – in 2022, 59 domains and 14 subdomains hosted by Shanghai Haixun were identified by Mandiant as slinging bogus pro-Beijing content.

Overall, Google revealed it has blocked over 1,000 sites from Google News and Google Discover since 2022. The takedowns were a response to what the search giant deemed deceptive behavior, and out of editorial transparency.

The Chocolate Factory reckons that Glassbridge's use of newswires indicates that information operations actors have moved beyond social media to spread their narratives. Similar tactics have been observed at Russian and Iranian operators.

But that doesn't mean Beijing is abandoning its foreign influencers. Plenty of government-linked trolls have been spotted this year – including from a separate influencing operations group tracked as Dragonbridge.

Dragonbridge content is also regularly found on websites related to Durinbridge and Shenzhen Bowen, Google's researchers wrote.

## Experts discuss future of Tibetan leadership and Dalai Lama's succession

25 November 2024, [Phayul](#), Tenzin Nyidon

The discussion around the future of Tibetan leadership especially over the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama was reinvigorated by a panel of well-known and competent personalities from both the Tibetan and international circuits. The webinar titled "The Future of Tibetan Leadership: Insights on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Succession" was organised by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF), a German foundation promoting liberal values hosted an international webinar on Wednesday

The panel featured prominent experts including Geshe Ven. Lhakdor, Director of the Dharmshala-based Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA); Prof. Anand Kumar, President of the India-Tibet Friendship Group; Dr. Tenzin Desal, Senior Researcher at the Tibet Policy Institute (TPI) and board member of the International Seminar of Young Tibetologists; and Chemi Lhamo, a Tibetan-Canadian activist and Canadian representative for the International Tibet Network's Steering Committee. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Anna Sawerthal, editor at the Austrian daily *Der Standard*.



Screengrab of distinguished speakers at the FNF's webinar held on Nov. 20, 2024

The webinar commenced with an introduction by Nupur Hasija, Senior Program Manager at the South Asia Regional Office of the FNF. She presented a short video highlighting FNF's long-standing collaboration with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) since 1991. A pre-recorded keynote address by Sandra Wesser, a member of the German parliament, underscored the significance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's upcoming 90th birthday. She described the occasion as a "milestone" in global leadership, offering a moment for the international community to reflect on the future of Tibetan leadership and its associated challenges.

CTA President Penpa Tsering, in his pre-recorded remarks, expressed gratitude to FNF for organising the

event and emphasised the importance of international awareness regarding His Holiness' reincarnation. "The Chinese government is not bothered by the living 14th Dalai Lama but they are more concerned about the yet to come, the 15th Dalai Lama," he noted. The Tibetan political leader also referenced the 16th Cabinet's official Position on the Issue of Reincarnation of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, published on September 29, 2022, reaffirming the Tibetan stance on the matter.

Ven. Geshe Lhakdor, who served as a religious assistant and translator to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for 16 years, emphasised the profound importance of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation in today's world. He highlighted Tibet's unique legacy in understanding the human mind and nurturing inner resources over millennia. "Tibet is the only country that has spent thousands of years studying the human mind and understanding its deeper potential to preserve and protect it," he stated. "We understand the concept of reincarnation better than anyone, and we recognise the immense importance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. In contrast, China, a country that restricts freedom, has minimal understanding of the human mind, and does not believe in religion, is now claiming the authority to recognise the Dalai Lama's reincarnation—just as they have with the Panchen Lama."

Geshe Lhakdor pointed out that China's interference in Tibetan religious practices is not new, dating back to the Manchu era when they sought to control Tibetans by influencing the recognition of high lamas. He noted that under the current authoritarian regime, this control has become even more aggressive. He criticised Beijing's approach, stating, "They think they are very clever, but to people with basic common sense—at least to someone like me—they are absolutely stupid. They are making a mockery of human intelligence. They have no right to recognise His Holiness' reincarnation. Even if they try to, no one will follow it. Some might be out of fear of the regime, as we've seen with the Panchen Lama."

Prof. Anand Kumar provided a comprehensive analysis of India's perspective on the challenges surrounding the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He highlighted the Dalai Lama's strategic transfer of political authority to the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), noting that secular matters now rest under the jurisdiction of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. This transition, he explained, has been recognised by the Indian government and supported by most global powers. As an observer, he said he noticed when Indian authorities receive courtesy from the Tibetan government in exile, they are no longer cross-checking with the Dalai Lama. "That is a very important development in the last 15 years— a scientific, rational, and secular solution to a problem

that will emerge with the physical passing of the 14th Dalai Lama."

Prof. Anand, who has actively engaged with the Tibetan cause since 1992, also reflected on the emotional connection between the Indian people and the Dalai Lama. "The Indians have been accustomed to identifying the Dalai Lama with Tibetans, and Tibet with the Dalai Lama. And we are always giving the highest importance to the position taken by the Dalai Lama in anything. Whenever reports emerge from Beijing, they are juxtaposed with those from Dharamshala, and it is Dharamshala's perspective that holds greater legitimacy," he noted. He also emphasised that India's support for the Tibetan cause transcends political affiliations, stating that the issue of Tibet in India has become a matter of national consensus regardless of which party is in power.

Activist Chemi Lhamo shared her perspective on how the international community can play a crucial role in addressing the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, particularly from the standpoint of Tibetans in far-flung diaspora countries. She emphasised the need for preemptive international support through legislation, citing the U.S. Tibet Policy and Support Act of 2020 as a model. "The Chinese Communist Party seeks control and legitimacy, both internally and externally. When denied this, they resort to asserting their narrative and creating confusion. This is precisely where the international community must step in—with clarity and recognition of how outrageous it is for the Chinese government to even participate in the conversation about reincarnation, let alone make decisions on it," she said.

Drawing a comparison, Chemi remarked that the idea of the Venezuelan government deciding the next Pope is "ridiculous," highlighting that even the Pope's selection involves a structured electoral process by the College of Cardinals. "In the case of reincarnation, it is not only a religious process but also a personal one. There is absolutely no room for political or colonial entities, such as the Chinese government, to interfere in this process. They are entirely unfit to do so." She further underscored the Chinese government's systematic destruction of Tibetan identity over the past seven decades. "This is the same regime actively erasing every aspect of Tibetan culture and identity. How can such a regime, the destroyer of Tibetan heritage, even attempt to speak about or decide the future of our spiritual leader?" she questioned. Chemi's remarks captured the strong sentiments of the Tibetan diaspora, rejecting any Chinese involvement in the reincarnation process. "The Chinese government has no right to be part of this conversation, and their actions only underscore their illegitimacy in this matter," she said.

Dr. Tenzin Desal, a fellow at TPI shared his insights on the signals emanating from the Tibetan exile capital



and the broader dynamics of the Tibetan community, which he described as consisting of two distinct yet interconnected strands— Tibetans living in exile and those living in Tibet under colonial occupation. He explained that to understand the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and its engagement with Tibet, we must consider two parallel activities—state-making and nation-building. “State-making is about incredible infrastructure building such as railways, and the omnipresent influence of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the everyday lives and politics of Tibetans inside Tibet. Nation-building, on the other hand, has proven to be a far greater challenge for the PRC as they attempt to impose the narrative that ‘Tibet is part of the PRC.’ This narrative faced a major reckoning in 2008, when widespread protests erupted across Tibet, with calls for the Dalai Lama’s return and demands for a free Tibet—clearly signalling the PRC’s failure.”

Dr. Desal highlighted the resilience of Tibetans inside Tibet, who, despite limited freedom to voice their opinions, continue to engage in creative forms of resistance. At the same time, the Tibetan exile movement, forged since 1959, has successfully created a cohesive dialogue between these two strands. “This cohesion between Tibetans inside Tibet and the diaspora movement, amplifying each other’s voices, is the biggest success story. And the singular figure uniting and navigating these strands is His Holiness the Dalai Lama,” he said.

Addressing the message from Dharamshala, he referenced a statement made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2011, affirming that discussions about his reincarnation would take place once he reaches the age of 90. “For now, we must wait a little longer for a clearer picture,” he said.

The overall importance of the issue, although acknowledged by the stakeholders around the world, have seldom been actualised through an event like this, which was viewed by watch parties around the world including Tibetans, followers of the Dalai Lama as well as geo-politicians and observers who realise the political implications of the coming years.

### **Protecting Chinese workers in Pakistan: Should the PLA intervene?**

25 November 2024, [Think China](#), Ghulam Ali

**As violence continues to break out in Pakistan, Chinese workers are among those targeted, despite the clashing forces having no quarrel with China. Academic Ghulam Ali notes that China sending troops to Pakistan would not guarantee the safety of its citizens, and might expose them to danger instead.** Unabated terrorist attacks on Chinese workers in Pakistan have prompted policy circles to discuss the

prospects of China’s direct involvement in ensuring the safety of its workers in the country. While both governments have remained tight-lipped, the media has uncovered information about ongoing discussions between the two nations.

If these reports prove valid, it would represent a major shift in China’s traditional policy of avoiding security roles in other countries. Furthermore, initiating such a role in a terror-hit Pakistan would serve as a litmus test for Beijing’s capabilities.

### **Decreasing Chinese investment**

Under its “flagship” China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China has committed nearly US\$62 billion for projects in Pakistan, of which US\$25 billion has already been spent. In developing this project, China has faced severe security challenges due to relentless terrorist attacks on its workers engaged in various projects in Pakistan.

In 2024 alone, seven Chinese nationals lost their lives in two separate attacks. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), a terrorist outfit fighting against the Pakistani military for the independence of Balochistan, and Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a religious extremist group demanding the implementation of strict Islamic laws and operating along the porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border, carried out these attacks. Such challenges have led China to reduce its investment in Pakistan by 74% in 2023, despite an increase in its post-pandemic investments worldwide. Chinese Premier Li Qiang made no commitments to new projects or to initiating the second phase of the CPEC during his maiden visit to Pakistan in October 2024.

### **China a soft target**

Notably, both BLA and TTP, fighting against the Pakistani military, harbour no direct grudges against China. Moreover, these terrorist groups are a result of the flawed policies of the Pakistani state.

China’s significance to Pakistan, due to its historically strong strategic relationship, makes it a soft target. Any attack on the Chinese in Pakistan would bring these groups into the international limelight, which they seek for attention.

The pernicious seeds of religious extremism in Pakistan were sown by military dictator General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1977-88), who imposed strict Islamic laws in the country and joined the Afghan jihad against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan during the 1980s. Subsequent military leadership also used religious proxies expeditiously.

The TTP is an offshoot of those policies. Most of its demands — implementation of Islamic laws, withdrawal of the military from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, provincial autonomy and the release of prisoners — are directed at the military. None of these demands is related to China.



Similarly, the insurgency in Balochistan is largely a reaction to oppressive military policies, marginalisation, denial of a share in the province's abundant natural resources, the establishment of military cantonments and the enforced disappearances of thousands of local Balochis. The roots of this insurgency, now in its fifth wave, trace back to the independence of Pakistan.

China's role in Balochistan began in 2002 with the construction of Gwadar port. Even after the completion of the first phase of the port, China withdrew, and the port was handed over to the Port of Singapore Authority (PSA). The differences between the Pakistani government and PSA were resolved by transferring administrative control to China in 2015.

Both terrorist groups are fighting against the Pakistani state, specifically the military. China is merely caught in the crossfire. China's significance to Pakistan, due to its historically strong strategic relationship, makes it a soft target. Any attack on the Chinese in Pakistan would bring these groups into the international limelight, which they seek for attention.

... the fundamental question is whether China's security role, through PSCs, the PLA, or other security operatives with a direct presence in Pakistan, will help ensure the safety of its citizens.

#### **China's security role in Pakistan: PSCs or the PLA?**

To counter these attacks, proposals for China's direct role in Pakistan's security have emerged. These include the deployment of China's private security companies (PSCs) or the People's Liberation Army (PLA), strengthening the capabilities of Pakistani security agencies, and establishing a joint security management system with Chinese security officials participating in security meetings.

China's PSCs, although having grown to thousands with millions of employees, have limited experience in international operations. According to reports, at most 40 of them have overseas operations. Furthermore, PSCs do not carry firearms, lack high-risk operational capabilities and operate under limited authority. Their role primarily consists of intelligence gathering, escort services, security training, risk assessment, site protection and emergency evacuation.

The deployment of PSCs or the PLA would require amendments to the existing laws of both countries, as they prohibit security roles in other countries. While amendments may not be difficult, as both states are involved, the fundamental question is whether China's security role, through PSCs, the PLA, or other security operatives with a direct presence in Pakistan, will help ensure the safety of its citizens.

Chinese deployments would hardly enhance security, given that they are unfamiliar with Pakistani culture and geographic conditions.

**China should think twice**

If PSCs or the PLA are deployed in the outer security circles around Chinese compounds or alongside vehicles carrying Chinese engineers, it would directly expose them to terrorist targets. As terrorists employ suicide attacks, which are the ultimate form of ambush, this reduces the chances of survival. Chinese deployments would hardly enhance security, given that they are unfamiliar with Pakistani culture and geographic conditions.

At the same time, deploying China's regular or paramilitary forces would contribute to the Baloch militants' narrative that China is assisting the Pakistani military in the exploitation of the province's resources, representing a new form of colonisation. On the global stage, it would reinforce the perception of China's expansionist agenda driven by its military power.

Considering that the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies, with all the resources at their disposal (equipment, access to information, and control over state machinery), have failed to ensure the safety of Chinese workers, how could small contingents of Chinese troops succeed in doing so?

The failure of Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts is not merely due to a lack of financing, equipment or intelligence sources. Following its entry into the US-led "war on terror" in 2002, the Pakistani military received substantial aid, equipment, and intelligence support from the US. Yet terrorist incidents in the country continued unabated.

China should think twice before entering into Pakistan's security quagmire, which is a product of the Pakistani military itself. Sending any form of troops to Pakistan offers no guarantee of safety for its citizens and would likely expose them further to terrorists. China can strengthen Pakistan's counterterrorism measures while simultaneously questioning the will of the Pakistani military in this fight.

#### **China-India ties to be more resilient in the Trump 2.0 era**

25 November 2024, [The Interpreter](#), Daniel Balazs

India and China have sought to defuse their military standoff and that will limit the prospect for US interference in their relations.

Donald Trump's upcoming engagement with China and India will be one of the key determinants of Asian affairs. While Beijing and New Delhi are emerging great powers, their bilateral ties are not immune to Washington's geopolitical calculations. US strategic support to India and the enhancement of defence cooperation exacerbated a major downturn of Sino-Indian ties after the 2020 Galwan conflict. Nevertheless, a recent breakthrough on border affairs and shared economic imperatives suggest that China-

India relations will be more robust against US strategic interference in the years to come.

China and India share a disputed border in the Himalayas that has served as a source of tension since the 1960s. China went to war over the border with India in 1962, and the two countries fought again in 1967. After an intense military standoff on the boundary in 1986-87, guns and boots gave way to decades of precarious stability. Frictions surfaced again in the 2010s, with bloodless military standoffs occurring in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017. In June 2020, a deadly fight in the Galwan valley claimed the lives of at least 20 Chinese and four Indian soldiers.

In the wake of the Galwan conflict, relations went into a nosedive. Not only did China and India deploy thousands of soldiers to the border, but tensions also spilled over into other areas. India restricted the inflow of Chinese investments, banning more than 250 applications developed by companies such as Tencent and Baidu, and conducted tax raids on telecommunications companies including Huawei and ZTE. India also expelled Chinese journalists, and China responded in kind.

The previous Trump administration branded China as a “strategic competitor” and it reacted to the Sino-Indian rift accordingly. Washington aided India during the Galwan conflict by providing it with intelligence and defence equipment. After the clashes, the United States and India signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement on Geospatial Cooperation, a pact that improves interoperability between the US and Indian militaries.

The Biden administration followed a similar approach. The 2022 National Defence Strategy and Indo-Pacific Strategy reiterated US support to India vis-à-vis China on the border and in the broader Indian Ocean region. A report also stated that the US shared intelligence with India that prevented another fatal clash in 2022. The Biden administration spearheaded cooperation with India in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “Quad”, and Biden referred to China as an aggressor at the meeting of the group earlier this year.

China watched these developments with unease. Chinese media blasted the US for destabilising Asia and cajoling New Delhi into a coalition against Beijing. Reports lambasted India for siding with the United States after the Galwan clashes, and exploiting a strategic collaboration with Washington against China.

**Last month, the Indian government announced that it had reached a border patrol agreement with China. The pact defused the Sino-Indian military standoff that had persisted since 2020.**

While US strategic interference worsened tensions between Beijing and New Delhi, recent developments

portend greater Sino-Indian resilience to Washington’s geopolitical designs for the region.

Last month, the Indian government announced that it had reached a border patrol agreement with China. The pact defused the Sino-Indian military standoff that had persisted since 2020. The agreement does not resolve the border dispute, but it lays down the foundation for the normalisation of Sino-Indian ties and has implications for the two Asian states’ relationship.

Stable ties with China allow India to reduce its reliance on US strategic support and offset one of the key drivers of India’s commitment to the Quad. Furthermore, the border agreement allows India to re-engage with China in the economic domain, as trade and investment relations with Beijing serve New Delhi’s goal of becoming a manufacturing hub. Investment proposals by China were already being approved on a case-by-case basis before the agreement, and such clearances could increase going forward.

A steady relationship with India also benefits China, as it counteracts New Delhi’s “strategic drift” towards the United States. As tensions subside, China’s outreach to India is likely to have an economic element. Accessing the vast Indian market would benefit China as it capitalises on exports for growth amid a real estate slowdown and a decline in consumer spending.

Trump’s upcoming trade policy could also drive rapprochement between India and China. Trump pledged to impose 60-100 per cent import tariffs on goods brought in from China and 10-20 per cent tariffs on imports from any other country. Recent analysis suggests that India could also be a target of additional punitive tariffs, and Trump has a track record of trade frictions with New Delhi. The first Trump administration’s steel and aluminium tariffs affected US-India trade and the United States also revoked India’s preferential trade treatment in 2019. Against this backdrop, China and India could benefit from each other’s markets to mitigate the impact of potential import tariffs imposed by the United States.

The Galwan conflict and the Sino-Indian rift allowed the United States to boost defence ties with India and shape the Asian strategic landscape to its advantage. With China and India on the road to rapprochement, Trump 2.0 will need to take a fresh look at Asian affairs and design a strategy that is less reliant on New Delhi’s animosity towards Beijing.

## Why loan from China under BRI may bring down KP Oli gov't in Nepal

25 November 2024, [FirstPost](#)

*Ahead of Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's visit to China in December, the country's ruling parties are at odds over Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). While Oli's Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist wants to go ahead with a loan from Beijing under the BRI, the Nepali Congress led by Sher Bahadur Deuba is staunchly against it. Let's take a closer look* Is the KP Sharma Oli-led government in Nepal in trouble?

Ahead of Oli's visit to China, Nepal's ruling parties are going at it over Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative.

While Oli's Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) party wants to go ahead with the loan from China, the Nepali Congress led by Sher Bahadur Deuba seems adamantly against it.

Oli, ahead of the China visit, struck an upbeat note.

"I am embarking on a visit to China on December 2 and it will not just be a tour to a foreign country," Oli said. "You will know by yourself how the visit became successful after I return home."

But what do we know about the row?

### Let's take a closer look:

#### Oli's CPN-UML pushes BRI

First, let's briefly examine Oli's upcoming trip.

As per *The Print*, this will be Oli's first foreign visit since taking office.

Nepal's foreign minister Arza Deuba is heading to China today ahead of the trip, as per *Indian Express*.

Deuba, the wife of Nepali Congress leader Sher Singh Deuba, will join Oli on the trip.

Oli's visit is a departure from history as Nepal's leaders usually visit India first after taking office – which is a nod to the close ties between Kathmandu and New Delhi.

However, Oli is thought to be a pro-China leader.

Oli previously visited China in March 2016 after taking power in 2015.

Oli and the CPN-UML have been pushing for more loans under China's Belt and Road Initiative from its Exim Bank, as per *Indian Express*.

The newspaper reported that Oli, at a meeting of top Nepal's officials last week which included Nepali Congress chief Sher Bahadur Deuba, his wife and Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba and NC general secretary Gagan Thapa, said he had made assurances to China that it would be difficult for him to back out of.

Oli, attending a grand rally organised by his party in Kathmandu last week, claimed that the government is firmly progressing towards its commitment to development, prosperity, and good governance.

Oli during the rally hinted that he intends to sign a few projects with China.

"As much as possible we don't want to take loans from anywhere; we are not in the condition that we can add on more loans but we have to increase our production. How can we increase our production? It's not something that we need to be depressed about. Rather we should be hopeful and raise awareness within our circle, other smaller countries aren't in the place where they're now," Oli said.

"Increasing productivity will be my priority," he added.

#### Nepali Congress opposes loan

But the Nepali Congress has been insistent on its stance against any new loans.

Oli during the meeting last week with the top officials was unable to convince his coalition partners the Nepali Congress to put pen to paper over the BRI framework, as per *Indian Express*.

The agreement, signed in 2017, is yet to be finalised.

"How much loan do we take? If grant, take it now. Let's not add further burden," Deuba told Oli during the meeting, as per *Rising Nepal Daily*.

According to *The Times of India*, China and Nepal are yet to negotiate a loan under the BRI despite intense efforts from Beijing.

Kathmandu has been historically reluctant to take loans – preferring instead to rely on grants – given the state of its economy.

It is also wary of falling into a debt trap like some other countries.

The Nepali Congress leaders insisted that Oli sign the BRI framework treaty only if the projects have 100 per cent grants.

Beijing has made it clear it has no interest in doing so. People in the know told *The Times of India* that the Nepali Congress may have a rethink about supporting the government if Oli proceeds with taking loans under the BRI over its objections.

The Nepali Congress, during a meeting at the Federal Parliament building to discuss Nepal's current economic situation and reform measures, had yet again reiterated that it would not accept any new loans under the BRI.

Prakash Sharan Mahat, the Nepali Congress spokesperson and ex-finance minister, said that China must honour its prior commitments before any talk of new loans.

"The Nepali Congress is not opposed to the BRI, we are simply saying that we cannot take on new loans at this time," he explained.

"In terms of the support we need for connectivity, we initially required grant assistance for road construction. Many of the commitments made by the Chinese government in grants have yet to be fulfilled, and those need to be addressed first."

Mahat further added, "If the grant implementation itself is lagging, what is the point of discussing loans? The debt burden is already increasing. Therefore, we

should avoid taking loans from any government, including the Chinese government.”

While the Chinese government is expected to implement grant commitments under the BRI, Mahat reiterated that new loans should not be pursued immediately.

“Regarding the BRI framework, are we attempting to combine other strategic security aspects into this? We believe these matters require careful consideration,” he stated.

“For now, the focus should be on implementing the grants, especially those under the BRI, and avoiding new loans,” he added.

Experts say Oli is in a tough spot.

“PM Oli is now treading a tightrope. He has to take the NC, the main ally of the coalition, into confidence so that he will make some significant gain from the China visit,” a piece in *Rising Nepal Daily* stated.

“Nepal’s political leaders should demonstrate their ability to navigate the geopolitical complexities. But their real leadership test lies in taking bold steps in the interest of the nation while avoiding the potential geopolitical pitfalls.”

#### **Oli remains upbeat**

Oli though, has remained upbeat

At last week’s rally he dismissed any rift between the coalition partners.

He said the cooperation between the CPN-UML and the Nepali Congress is aimed at lifting the country from its decline.

He also rubbished allegations made by his opponents, justified the alliance between the Nepali Congress and CPN-UML to form the incumbent coalition government, and vowed to take action against corruption, anarchy and those violating the law.

Any form of fraud, smuggling, corruption, character assassination, and obscenity is unacceptable, the prime minister said.

Addressing what is claimed to be the awareness campaign of the party, Oli urged the investors to invest with confidence as the government is on a mission to create a ‘Prosperous Nepal and Happy Nepali’ by maintaining peace and security.

“You should invest, the government will arrange security and good governance,” he told industrialists.

Addressing the rally seen as Oli’s first show of strength of his party CPN-UML after assuming power a year and a half ago, the premier claimed the economy is improving due to the policies and plans adopted by the CPN-UML-Congress coalition.

Rejecting rumours spread by the opposition parties regarding the fall of the government, Oli assured it would run for a full five-year term till the next election. He vowed to hand over power to Nepali Congress chief Sher Bahadur Deuba in a one-and-a-half-year term as per the power-sharing deal between the two largest parties.

He also sought to reassure India earlier this month.

“That I am visiting China first does not mean our relation with India is not good,” he told the *Kathmandu Post*.

“We took a position while India imposed a blockade [in 2015-16], so they were not happy. There is no reason for them to be unhappy with us [now] as we will maintain friendly, balanced and good relations with both our neighbors.”

#### **China's People Deserve the Truth—Not Censorship | Opinion**

25 November 2024, [Newsweek](#), Ben Cardin

On Nov. 11, in Zhuhai, China, a 62-year-old man drove his car into a crowd at a sports complex, killing 35 people and injuring 43 others. It was China's deadliest mass killing in more than a decade. While the tragedy barely made headlines in the West, many Chinese citizens may not have heard about it inside China, where it was swiftly and thoroughly swept under the rug by the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) vast censorship apparatus. Even foreign news agencies faced intimidation, and in the case of a *BBC* reporter, physical assault, when he attempted to cover the developments in Zhuhai.

Before family members, friends, and acquaintances of the victims could even begin to grieve, CCP authorities quickly dismantled makeshift memorials and removed flower arrangements placed in remembrance. Social media platforms in China were instructed to delete posts expressing outrage and sorrow. Once again, the CCP quickly escalated its censorship efforts to suppress public discussions of the tragedy and its impact, leaving Chinese citizens to grapple with this incident—and what it says about their country—in the midst of an information blackout.

In Washington, we tend to focus on China's global ambitions, its economic competition with the United States, and its aggressive behavior on the international stage which challenge the global norms that we and our allies have upheld since World War II. We analyze China's conduct through diplomatic, economic, and security lenses, but we continually overlook a critical element of U.S.-China policy—the Chinese people.

Some of this is out of our control. Under President [Xi Jinping](#), the CCP has repeatedly restricted access to U.S. diplomats and cancelled dozens of public events organized by the United States mission in China. He is also responsible for expanding the CCP's powerful media and online censorship regime that blocks outside, independent, or "sensitive" information—like news about the Zhuhai mass casualty incident—silencing free expression among people in China.

What we can control is how we respond to these challenges. So far, despite the excellent work of outlets

like *Radio Free Asia* and *Voice of America*, our efforts to engage with the Chinese people and empower them with access to uncensored information have fallen short. In the near term, this weakens our ability to counter the anti-U.S. propaganda aimed at China's 1.4 billion citizens. Over time, it risks creating a lasting divide in mutual understanding and goodwill between our nations, potentially leading to broader support for—or an implied acceptance of—some of Xi's extreme policies.

Despite ongoing censorship, Chinese citizens are increasingly questioning their government's policies and conduct. More are seeking alternative sources of information and calling for greater economic and political freedoms. The 2022 White Paper Movement protests against the Chinese government's draconian "zero-COVID" policy clearly demonstrated that desire. And perceptions of the United States have recently shown improvement despite a constant barrage of targeted anti-U.S. propaganda. The stakes are higher than ever, yet all the evidence suggests we have an unprecedented opportunity to engage.

This pivotal moment calls for bold steps to deepen understanding, bridge divides, and build genuine connections with the people of China. That's why, when I introduced the bipartisan Informing a Nation with Free, Open, and Reliable Media (or INFORM Act)—a bill directing the executive branch to share clear, independent information to Chinese citizens—I hoped to spark a much-needed conversation in [Congress](#) about how U.S. policy can better support the rights and freedoms of those who have long endured intense repression and censorship. That conversation should also remind us that the Chinese people are not our adversaries; they are members of the global community, entitled to the same liberties that all people deserve from a government that respects their dignity.

As the new administration takes office and the next chair of the [Senate](#) Foreign Relations Committee steps into their role, it's critical that they make this issue a priority and join in this important conversation. It is vital that we continue to emphasize that our differences are with China's authoritarian government, not its people. By recognizing the Chinese people as partners in the international community rather than enemies, the United States can reframe its approach to U.S.-China policy—grounding it in shared human values between our two citizenries. While we continue to prioritize economic, military, and technological competition with China's government, it's also time to dedicate our efforts and resources to meaningful engagement with the people of China. From the Tiananmen Square protests to the resilience seen in the White Paper Movement, Chinese citizens have repeatedly shown remarkable resolve in the face of repression. This latest tragedy in Zhuhai

underscores what's at stake—not only the rights of those to grieve and seek justice but also the very soul of China's future. Each silenced story, each deleted post, and each dismantled memorial is a stark reminder that, without the means to connect, learn, and question, the Chinese people are left isolated from the truth and the outside world.

If we are as serious about the China challenge as we profess, we must continue to stand up for the Chinese people who are courageously leading the way.

### **How Xi Jinping is going back to Confucius to define China's future**

24 November 2024, [SCMP](#), Xinlu Liang

#### **Xi's plan to glorify China's deep cultural roots is embodied in Ruzang, a compilation of the philosopher's writings and related works**

For most of the 103-year history of the Communist Party of China, the teachings of the philosopher Confucius were deemed relics of a backwards past, with its leaders looking to Marxism and socialism to modernise China.

But under President Xi Jinping's leadership, Confucianism has made a dramatic comeback as the bedrock of imperial Chinese ethics and governance, and other Chinese classics have become the pillars of Beijing's efforts to shore up its intellectual foundation and governance philosophy amid an intensifying ideological competition with the US-led West.

One of the latest ventures is the Ruzang, or "Confucian Canon", project to create the largest ever compilation of Confucian classics. The project, which has had the input of nearly 500 scholars since it was started in 2003, was significantly elevated in 2014 when Xi became the first Chinese president to throw his personal weight behind it.

Within China, the project is reminiscent of similar immense canon projects undertaken only a few times in the past 2,000 years, and is set to become a major source of inspiration for better governance.

Among those contributing to Ruzang are international scholars, with Beijing apparently aiming to appeal to overseas Chinese. But experts point to geopolitical tensions and a public opinion of Confucianism as a Han-centric idea as obstacles.

The Ruzang project was first approved in 2003 by the Education Ministry under then president Hu Jintao and spearheaded by Chinese philosopher [Tang Yijie](#), who pledged to compile all known Confucian classics while explaining the survival and development of the nation. Xi backed the project when he visited then 87-year-old Tang at Peking University in 2014, hailing it as "a very meaningful endeavour that carries forward Chinese civilisation".

Peking University vice-president Wang Bo took over the project from Tang after he died in 2014.



Wang was chosen to make policy recommendations at October's study session of the 24-man Politburo chaired by Xi, who spoke on the goal of turning China into a "cultural powerhouse" by 2035, drawing strength from Marxism and Chinese traditional heritage.

So far, nearly 500 scholars from around 100 institutions in China, South Korea, Japan and Vietnam have collaborated on the project, with estimated costs around 150 million yuan (US\$21 million).

By April last year the first phase had compiled 510 influential Confucian writings into 282 volumes. The ongoing second phase aims to include an additional 160 works, resulting in a massive collection of about a billion characters – the largest of its kind in China's history.

The Confucian Canon is among China's efforts to tap into its cultural and philosophical roots to strengthen national pride at home, dubbed by Xi as "Compilation of Classics in the Flourishing Age".

To many Chinese, Xi's description brings to mind Chinese writing projects such as the "Five Classics" of Confucian works in the Han dynasty (206BC-AD220), the vast *Yongle Dadian*, an encyclopaedia commissioned under the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), and the *Siku Quanshu*, which was written in the 18th century during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) and was the largest collection of books in imperial China.

The Confucian Canon follows the basic structure of *Siku Quanshu*, categorising works from the pre-Qin dynasty to the end of the Qing dynasty, including original Confucian classics, works reflecting Confucian thought and literature related to governance, and personal conduct that reflects Confucianism, according to the Peking University Editorial and Research Centre of Confucian Canon.

Some literature previously deemed non-Confucian – such as that of Tao Yuanming, traditionally a Taoist poet and politician; and Qi Jiguang, a Ming dynasty general who fought Japanese pirates – have been included because they reflect Confucian ideals.

This scope presents a holistic view of Confucian thought over time, complete with editorial footnotes explaining each text's significance.

Meanwhile, the texts were also digitised, which could play a crucial role in making these ancient texts accessible to scholars and the public around the world, according to the centre's interviews with multiple project editors.

### **Confucianism's changing role**

In various media interviews, Tang Yijie emphasised Confucianism's influence on ancient Chinese politics, economics, and culture. He said that while historically Buddhist and Daoist canons had been compiled, there was no overarching Confucian Canon because resources had been limited.

While the Ruzang project has academic benefits, analysts say it also encapsulates a broader narrative connected to China's cultural renaissance and national security concerns amid the prevailing narrative war with the West.

Stephen C. Angle, a professor of philosophy and East Asian Studies at Wesleyan University in the United States, notes that the project reflects both political motives and "a genuine desire ... to re-energise" Confucianism as a source of theory and practice in Chinese society.

"Confucianism must be seen as 'progressive', which means developing in response to modern social, economic and political changes," he said.

For centuries, Confucianism has served as the foundation of Chinese ethics and governance and influenced various dynasties.

Confucius, born in 551BC, proposed a system based on hierarchy mixed with benevolence, a reflection of the importance of social harmony and moral integrity in governance.

However, these principles faced being rejected during the revolutionary upheavals of the 20th century.

"Chinese dynasties have typically relied on the Confucian canon for legitimacy. Only radical regimes, like the Communist Party in the 20th century, opposed this notion, particularly during the May Fourth Movement and Cultural Revolution," said Rana Mitter, ST Lee Chair in US-Asia Relations at Harvard Kennedy School.

While the official hostility towards Confucianism ended after the Cultural Revolution Chinese leaders in the subsequent decades mainly leaned towards the liberal democracy and capitalist model, said Daniel A. Bell, a chair professor at the University of Hong Kong. Bell is the author of *The Dean of Shandong*, an account of Chinese academia based on his experience at Shandong University from 2017 to 2022, when he was involved in promoting Confucianism through teaching and research.

He said that since the 1990s, "Confucianism and communism mounted huge and unexpected comebacks" in a multipolar world, as China claimed it would not copy the West.

According to Bell, who was last month elected vice-president of the International Confucian Association, politically Confucianism provides a "source of values-based legitimacy" that complements Marxism and psychologically, it addresses the "atomisation and moral vacuum" created by capitalist-style modernisation.

The revival gained further traction in the 2000s under then president Hu's "Harmonious Society" strategy alongside the establishment of Confucius Institutes worldwide.

Since Xi assumed leadership in 2012, cultural initiatives have been emphasised as part of

China's national security, encompassing various dimensions.

The resurgence of Confucianism culminated when Xi visited Qufu, Confucius's birthplace, in eastern Shandong province in 2013 and made a speech on the 2,565th birthday of Confucius in September 2014 – the first time a Chinese president had taken part in celebrations marking Confucius's birth.

He personally endorsed the role of the sage and suggested Confucianism could offer solutions for global peace and development. "Confucianism is key to understanding the national characteristics of the Chinese as well as the historical roots of the spiritual world of the present-day Chinese," he said during the 2014 celebration.

He added that Confucianism had evolved and responded to the demands of the times.

In that year, the Communist Party mandated that officials nationwide attend lectures on Confucius and other classical philosophers.

#### **Legalism – the school less discussed**

Xi has referred to classical texts so frequently that in 2015 and 2018, Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily compiled two volumes of quotes he used from important articles and speeches. Among the selected nearly 300 quotes, Confucianism is his most cited philosophy, followed by Legalism.

While Beijing has not promoted the school of thought known as Legalism as prominently, some academics, such as Delia Lin from the University of Melbourne, argue that Xi combines both philosophies.

Legalism is a pragmatic governance approach characterised by strict laws, centralised authority and the belief that human nature is inherently self-interested and could lead to chaos without proper control.

Confucianism promotes moral leadership and social harmony, justifying the Communist Party's authority through the idea of the virtuous ruler, or "sage-king", aligned with Xi's "rule by virtue".

In 2017, Lin wrote in a book chapter that "Confucianised Legalism" was the dual emphasis on moral education and firm legal structures that underpinned Xi's governing framework.

It enabled the Communist Party to claim both legitimacy and effectiveness in governance, and was highlighted in the 2014 fourth plenary session, which reinforced the commitment to "governing the country according to law".

In multiple speeches about governing by the law and anti-corruption, Xi has cited Legalism classics in defence of the hardline crackdown.

"Today's China under Xi Jinping is leaning into the idea of China as a source of traditional wisdom. This has tapped into a greater nationalist pride in China's intellectual traditions more broadly in China," said Harvard historian Mitter.

#### **Intellectual legitimacy**

Besides the canon project, in recent years there has been a slew of "Chinese culture projects" that all reinforce Beijing's narrative of a continuous history with China a global power with ancient status.

They include the "China Paintings through the Ages" series exhibited since 2022, a project that aims to document and preserve Chinese paintings from ancient times to the Qing dynasty. Additionally, the evacuation of archaeological sites such as Liangzhu serve as physical proof of China's 5,000-year civilisation.

These changes manifest that "modern China looks back to its civilisational heritage to extract wisdom that can inform its future," according to Peter T.C. Chang, a visiting senior fellow with the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore.

The ideological foundation of China was rooted in Leninist-Marxist thought, but the current leadership recognised the importance of the country's indigenous traditions, especially Confucianism, he said.

"This process marks a return to cultural roots, using the teachings of Confucianism and other traditional philosophies as guiding principles for China's continued development and governance."

The key approach, in Xi's own words, is to "Sinicise Marxism" through Chinese traditional culture, a process outlined in the "two combines" strategy introduced in 2021 during the party's centenary. It was later added to Xi Jinping Thought on Culture, which was raised in October last year as the sixth pillar of the paramount leader's political doctrine that has been enshrined in the constitution since 2018.

The "first combine" adapts Marxism to China's unique realities, exemplified by Deng Xiaoping's reforms. The "second combine" coined by Xi integrates Marxism with traditional Chinese culture.

At the symposium in June last year, Xi asserted: "This fusion has resulted in a distinctly Chinese style and character, with Sinicised Marxism becoming the essence of Chinese culture and spirit in contemporary times".

He also hailed China's unique development path in its uninterrupted cultural continuity, creativity, unity, inclusiveness and peaceful nature.

#### **Limited influence abroad**

China's ongoing revival of Confucianism also comes amid its struggle against Western narratives that frame China as "authoritarian" and resistant to modern democratic values.

The canon project involves collaboration with scholars from South Korea, Japan and Vietnam, emphasising their shared cultural heritage. However, experts warn the project must be handled sensitively and with limited effects because of ongoing political disputes.

The project aims to strengthen Chinese identity and pride in the achievements of Chinese civilisation while

also emphasising common cultural ties with neighbouring countries, according to China observer Andrew Nathan, a Columbia University professor of political science.

He said it might be difficult for the objectives of the project, while valid, to resonate beyond China's borders.

"When Chinese classics travelled to other neighbouring countries, they were reinterpreted and adapted in those countries, just as Chinese thinkers adapted Buddhism from India or Mao Zedong carried out the 'Sinification of Marxism,'" he said, adding that the project should consider this variation in national traditions within the broader framework of Confucian thought.

Germaine A. Hoston, a political-science professor at the University of California, San Diego, also underscored the need for sensitivity in recognising Confucian contributions across different countries in Asia to avoid undermining the legitimacy of the project.

"It is important that such contributions are not disregarded or diminished in an effort to reassert Chinese military, political and cultural hegemony in the region," she said.

The influence of Confucianism beyond China – or not – is a subject of discussion among observers and academics.

For Chang, Confucianism today remains largely a Han-centric sphere, despite its influence in Japan and South Korea.

"To promote Confucianism globally without being perceived as a form of cultural hegemony, the tradition must undergo a process of 'de-Sinicisation,'" ensuring that teachings were accessible through translations that facilitate engagement without cultural barriers, he said.

Larger differences related to geopolitical and other disagreements may overshadow common heritage.

According to Mitter, there has been "relatively little spillover effect, even in Asia," as "China's contemporary political disputes over war memory, territory and economics mean that neighbouring states prioritise those issues over ideas of shared common cultural heritage".

Outside Asia, Confucianism was increasingly being positioned as a "counterpoint" to Western narratives, particularly Samuel Huntington's "Clash of Civilisations" theory, Chang pointed out.

"Xi Jinping's vision of a 'community of shared future for humanity' draws upon Confucian values of harmony and coexistence. This philosophy provides an alternative Eastern world view that emphasises peaceful collaboration and mutual respect, contrasting with the more conflict-oriented outlook of some Western theories.

"The Confucian principle of harmonious coexistence is thus being employed as a framework for advocating global unity over division," he said.

Another criticism of China's attempts to promote traditional Chinese culture – especially Confucianism – is that it promotes state propaganda or "cultural hegemony".

For Angle, some of the criticism is justified "because too often, official representatives of Chinese culture have not acted in a confident way, but in a rigid way that refuses all questions or genuine dialogue".

Bell suggested there needed to be "Confucian-style 'soft power' – rule by virtue, moral example, 'diversity in harmony', personal freedom and political participation at the local level – to counter and soften centralising and totalising tendencies of China's legalist tradition that advocates strong state power above all else".

### **New Delhi needs to warm up China-India relations with sincerity**

24 November 2024, [Global Times](#), Lou Chunhao

With the successful implementation of the resolutions that China and India recently reached on issues concerning the border area, the China-India relationship, which has been lingering at a low level for over four years, is entering a window of opportunity for improvement. The Indian side has expressed its willingness to strengthen strategic communication with China, enhance strategic mutual trust, and expand mutually beneficial cooperation. It has also proposed relevant ideas and suggestions for improving and developing bilateral relations, leading to positive expectations for the future of the relationship between the two countries. However, some argue that the current shift in India's attitude is partly due to its widening differences with the US, Canada, and others over issues of "democracy" and "human rights," as well as considerations to reduce the resource consumption of winter troop deployments along the border. This has raised doubts about New Delhi's sincerity in improving relations with China. Given India's previous inconsistencies in its policy toward China, these doubts are not without merit. Therefore, in addition to strategically eliminating erroneous concepts such as "relying on the US to counter China" and "war is inevitable between China and India," India also needs to work with China to promote the stable and healthy development of bilateral relations. Currently, India needs to make efforts in at least the following three areas. First, it's necessary for India to rationally guide domestic public opinion to foster a positive understanding of China. The development of China-India relations requires a solid foundation of public

opinion. It is particularly necessary for the government and mainstream media to properly guide rather than manipulate, public sentiment when issues arise in bilateral relations. However, in recent years, some Indian military and political officials have excessively exaggerated the contradictions and differences between China and India. Certain think tank scholars and media outlets have been eager to fabricate the "China military threat" narrative, frequently amplifying the "China threat" to attract attention and generate traffic. This has significantly poisoned the Indian public's perception of China.

A key issue in this situation is the role the Indian government should play and the signals it should send. In light of the recent positive momentum in China-India relations, it is crucial for the Indian side to clearly explain to its citizens the necessity and inevitability of improving and developing these relations.

Second, it is crucial to decisively abandon the practices of overstressing the concept of security and genuinely deepen economic and trade cooperation. Over the past 30 years, China-India economic and trade cooperation has made significant progress, with continuous improvements in cooperation mechanisms and steady growth in investment and trade. Economic and trade cooperation was once regarded as the "ballast stone" of bilateral relations. Both sides not only regard the development of a partnership as a core component of their strategic and cooperative relationship but have also established a high-level economic and trade dialogue mechanism to strengthen the alignment of economic development strategies, and promote balanced and sustainable growth in bilateral trade.

However, in recent years, India has increasingly tended to view its economic and trade relationship with China from a competitive, and even substitutive or hedging perspective. This shift has led to discriminatory economic and trade policies against China, such as banning Chinese applications, restricting Chinese investments in India, and suppressing Chinese enterprises operating in India, which have severely harmed the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies. Clearly, India has not benefited, and cannot benefit, from its discriminatory policies against China. The Indian government is also attempting to create a favorable business environment to attract more foreign direct investment. Restoring and strengthening economic and trade cooperation with China would be beneficial in achieving these goals. Third, it is essential to eliminate artificial barriers as soon as possible and actively promote people-to-people exchanges. Amity between the people holds the key to sound state-to-state relations. As two ancient civilizations, China and India have historically benefited from cultural exchanges that provide positive energy to their bilateral relations. However, in

recent years, the Indian side has imposed artificial obstacles, such as suspending direct flights to China, limiting visas, halting activities, and expelling journalists. These actions have led to a dramatic decline in bilateral people-to-people exchanges. China has consistently maintained an open attitude toward people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, while the Indian side's self-imposed barriers have left many rational individuals who hope for stable development in China-India relations feeling surprised and perplexed. The recent state of academic exchanges between China and India illustrates this point. Many Indian scholars have been invited to participate in academic activities in China, while it has become increasingly difficult for Chinese scholars to engage in face-to-face exchanges in India. The Indian government needs to promptly lift restrictions on people-to-people exchanges with China, allowing for more frequent interactions; otherwise, hopes for improved bilateral relations will be extinguished once again.

The current disengagement efforts at relevant border points are merely the first step toward easing border tensions and promoting the improvement of bilateral relations. China-India relations have not yet returned to the state they were in before the Galwan Valley conflict in 2020. Actions speak louder than words; we hope that India will quickly take concrete and positive actions on various issues related to bilateral cooperation, truly working to thaw the relationship between China and India.

#### **Decoding PM Modi's message to China**

23 November 2024, [The Indian Express](#), Ram Madhav

*The Modi government's China policy is pragmatic and realist. It understands that the bilateral relationship cannot be placed in any specific category of friends or foes. It will remain volatile*

Three important meetings between the leaders of India and China have generated a sense among observers that the two countries are cosyng up to each other once again. Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia in October on the sidelines of the BRICS summit. This was followed by a meeting between the Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, at Rio de Janeiro in Brazil on the sidelines of the G20 summit. Around the same time, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh was in Vientiane in Laos, shaking hands with his Chinese counterpart, Admiral Dong Jun. Prime Minister Modi's meeting with Xi Jinping comes five years after the second India-China informal bilateral summit at Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu in 2019. China's violation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in early 2020, leading to the deaths of 20 Indian soldiers and an unknown number

of Chinese soldiers, stalled the bilateral engagement process.

Sporadic engagements on a few occasions notwithstanding, bilateral relations remained tense through the last four years. The coldness was conspicuous at the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, in 2022, when Modi and Xi limited their interaction to a mere handshake. The two leaders bumped into each other once again at the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2023. Not much enthusiasm was witnessed after a brief meeting between the two, which the Chinese readout described as held “at the latter’s request”.

Bilateral engagements in the last one month, however, have generated a different kind of enthusiasm. The Chinese readout on the Modi-Xi meeting described the two countries as “important members of the Global South”, and said that they “must also shoulder their international responsibility, set an example in boosting the strength and unity of developing countries, and contribute to promoting a multipolar world.” On its part, the external affairs ministry of India, too, sounded positive, suggesting that “stable, predictable, and amicable bilateral relations” between the “two largest nations on earth”, will have a positive impact on regional and global peace and prosperity. In a post on ‘X’, Rajnath Singh described his talks with Dong as “extremely productive”. At Rio, Jaishankar underscored that the countries worked “constructively” in the BRICS and SCO framework, and “our cooperation in the G20 has also been evident”.

Predictably, a lot of commentary is happening over the trajectory of India-China relations. Global Times declared that “there are encouraging signs that China-India relations are moving forward”. Some suggested that India’s economic compulsions propelled it to restore normalcy with its neighbour while others have argued that China wants to exploit India’s tensions with the West.

There are two types of strategic analysts among China watchers — hawks and doves. The hawks believe that a thaw between the two countries is impossible. They cite examples to buttress the point that the northern neighbour cannot be trusted. Then there are doves, who believe that despite the challenges the two countries must and will work together. Jawahar Lal Nehru was known for his dovish views on India-China relations. “Indeed, I may say that we shall always leave the door open for an honourable settlement with China”, he argued in 1963, even in the face of a humiliating defeat inflicted by it on India.

However, the breed of doves is shrinking as there is reduced appetite for a romantic approach to the bilateral relationship, especially after the Galwan incident. On a lighter note, doves are big suspects now. Last year, Indian agencies captured a pigeon “suspiciously” roaming near a port in Mumbai. It had

rings attached to its feet that carried Chinese letters. It was detained for eight months only to be let off in April this year after thorough investigation of possible espionage attempts by the Chinese. Even the Congress party, accused for long of being dove-ish on China, is seeking to refurbish its image by hawkishly attacking the Modi Government for “gullibility and naïveté” regarding China.

The Modi government’s China policy is pragmatic and realist. It understands that the bilateral relationship cannot be placed in any specific category of friends or foes. It will remain volatile, with the two countries having “both differences and convergences” on bilateral and international issues, as Jaishankar told his counterpart. India also remembers that despite dozens of agreements between the two countries since the “Peace and Tranquility Agreement” of 1993, the LAC violations by China continued unabated. In 2013, AK Antony, the then defence minister, told the Indian Parliament that just as his government was signing border agreements with China in 2012 and 2013, there were more than 400 transgressions by the Chinese army between 2010 and 2013.

That is the reason why the Modi government has demonstrated cautious optimism about the future of bilateral relations. While welcoming the thaw, Modi underscored the importance of “properly handling differences and disputes”, and advised that ties should be “stable, predictable, and amicable”. Jaishankar reiterated that “mutual sensitivity, mutual respect and mutual interest” must be the touchstone for improving ties. While China continues to take potshots, stating that “improvement in bilateral relations in the future will largely depend on the sincerity of the Indian side”, and “India’s policy that aims at decoupling from China has failed” and “India can’t profit from being hostile to or decoupling from China, and it is even making it difficult for India to realise its own development”, the Indian leadership has gently but firmly told its Chinese counterparts that its foreign policy has been “principled and consistent, marked by independent thought and action”. Jaishankar told Wang Yi that “we are against unilateral approaches to establish dominance” and India “does not view its relationships through the prism of other nations”.

PM Modi has conveyed the crucial message that India is not only strongly committed to a multipolar world, but also “a multipolar Asia”. Some argue that a “new beginning” is being made in bilateral relations. But what India wants is a “new understanding” on China’s part to deal with old challenges and new opportunities.



## India-China border agreement: A case for military buildup

23 November 2024, [ORF](#), Kartik Bommakanti

*In light of India's new patrolling agreement with China, the country needs to increase its military spending and bolster its armed forces against future threats*

With India and China reaching a limited agreement on the disengagement from and patrolling of the Depsang Bulge and Demchok areas in eastern Ladakh, there is widespread jubilation in some quarters. The celebration of this breakthrough announced on 21 October 2024, should be tempered by the reality that there is still a significant amount of disengagement, de-escalation, and de-induction of forces to be completed by New Delhi and Beijing. Pending further negotiations, under the latest agreement, the following friction points were left out—Galwan Valley (PP 14), Pangong Tso (North and South Banks), Gogra (PP 17A) and Hotsprings (PP 15). These four areas are currently under buffer zones that prohibit patrolling, meaning the *status quo ante*, has not been restored completely. Meanwhile, with Depsang and Demchok, India and China have agreed to “coordinated patrolling,” which one analyst described as an “innovation.” This is misleading and deceptive because it is not an innovation, but a restriction on patrolling. There are three patrolling restrictions under the latest agreement.

Firstly, each patrol team cannot exceed 14 troops. Secondly, the other side must be notified before embarking on a patrol. Thirdly, the number of patrols that Indian and Chinese forces can conduct cannot exceed two or three every month, to all the points they deem part of their territory in Depsang and Demchok. Indeed, though India can patrol areas in Demchok, it is not permitted to patrol Charding La—a key pass. In addition, there is a *quid pro quo*. Just as India has gained patrolling access to Demchok and Depsang up to Patrolling Points (PP) 10, 11, 11A, 12, and 13, which it last secured access to in January 2020, China has gained a reciprocal concession by way of an “escorted patrol” in the Yangste area of Arunachal Pradesh, as well as another location. These patrolling restrictions did not apply under the terms of the 1993 and 1996 agreements. Further, these “innovations” are ultimately a concession to the Chinese because most of the territory that the Chinese occupied in April-May 2020 was primarily India-dominated, if not India-controlled, territory.

*Beijing has numerous opportunities to rake up trouble along the entire stretch of the 3,500 kilometres of contested boundary between India and China.*

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) maintains that “...verification patrolling has commenced on mutually agreed terms in Demchok and Depsang.” Nevertheless, restrictive conditions have

been built into this agreement, in a quest to avoid clashes between Chinese and Indian forces. Only time will tell whether this arrangement will deliver the stabilising impact that the Modi government claims it is intended to achieve. Theoretically, clashes could still occur even under the new patrolling arrangement. Beijing has numerous opportunities to rake up trouble along the entire stretch of the 3,500 kilometres of contested boundary between India and China. India has had to accept these restrictive conditions as the price for resuming a limited patrolling agreement at Demchok and the Depsang Plains. The Chinese have compelled India to accept a shift in the terms of prior patrolling arrangements, and India's consent implies a tacit acceptance of China's case that earlier patrolling arrangements—as a result of agreements in 1993, 1996, 2005, and 2012—were unworkable or ineffective. Where does that leave India's quest to restore the *status ante* of April 2020? Despite the Modi government's impressive infrastructure build-up along the Sino-Indian boundary, which was one of the key reasons for the Chinese precipitating the ongoing boundary crisis, has New Delhi conceded to Beijing's demands that it will limit further infrastructure development, especially the Darbuk-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) road? The government will have to come clean and clarify these matters. To its credit, the Modi government has invested heavily in border infrastructure and introduced vital changes in the military command structure. Under the interim budget in February 2024, the government has allocated more capital to the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) to beef up infrastructure in critical parts along the Sino-Indian border, such as the Nyoma Airfield in Ladakh, Shinku La Tunnel in Himachal Pradesh, the Nechiphu Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh and several others. Supplementing this infrastructure build-up, visible change is underway in the Indian Army's conversion of its Headquarters Uttar Bharat (HQ-UB) into a new comprehensively operational Corp. This change is geared toward shifting the focus from the peacetime duties of the HQ-UB, which is now a Corps, to a Line of Actual Control (LaC) in the Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand sectors. These are very indispensable and laudable measures. Although the government is performing commendably on these two metrics, it is insufficient.

*Engagement with Beijing without militarily equipping the Indian armed forces with additional capabilities conveys weakness.*

Although the Modi government's work on India's border infrastructure paved the way for India's military mobilisation against China's annexation of Indian territory in April-May 2020, it has to do more to accumulate military strength through additional capital expenditure. Since 2017, well before the eruption of the current boundary crisis between India

and China, there has not been significant growth in the defence budget, especially in capital acquisitions. Growth has been primarily in revenue expenditure which covers pensions, allowances, salaries and so on. This high growth of revenue spending is also driven by “One Rank, One Pension” (OROP). Even with the introduction of the Agnipath recruitment scheme, cost savings that are intended to help pay for capital acquisitions in the armed services, will not reap benefits until many years later. Engagement with Beijing without militarily equipping the Indian armed forces with additional capabilities conveys weakness. It will run the risk of inviting more crises and possibly a serious military conflagration with the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

### **What draws China’s anti-corruption watchdogs to Guangdong and its ‘sin city’ Dongguan?**

23 November 2024, [SCMP](#), William Zheng

#### **As dozens of high-ranking officials fall in corruption scandals, a political analyst reveals a common thread**

China’s southern Guangdong province, with its sprawling textile and electronics manufacturing hubs, has long been known as a global economic powerhouse. But in recent years, it has gained a reputation of a very different kind.

In cities such as Dongguan and Huizhou, corruption investigations are widening against local cadres – often former officials accused of having used their position to take money from companies in return for special favours.

Xu Jianhua, who served as the Dongguan party secretary from 2011 to 2016, became the latest official to be placed under investigation, with the provincial disciplinary commission announcing on Wednesday that he had been detained.

Xu, 66, is suspected of committing “serious violations of discipline and law” – a euphemism for corruption.

Xu was well-known for leading a government crackdown in February 2014 after state broadcaster CCTV exposed an extensive underground sex trade and thriving red light districts in Dongguan, a sprawling manufacturing base known also as “sin city”.

Xu’s detention comes just two months after Zhong Ganquan, the former deputy head of Dongguan’s political advisory body, was placed under investigation.

Zhong, a Dongguan local who for decades was chief of the city’s Humen district famed for its textile and electronics exporters, earned fame as “the man who knows all”.

In August, former Dongguan mayor Li Yuquan, who served from 2006 to 2011, was also detained on corruption charges.

All three have long retired from official duties.

A tally based on announcements from Guangdong’s provincial and municipal level anti-corruption bodies shows that 42 sitting and former party and government heads in Dongguan have faced corruption investigations so far this year.

A common factor in the investigations appeared to involve land sales.

According to a political analyst from Guangdong’s Sun Yat-sen University, township governments control land sales in many cities in the province, particularly in Dongguan.

“The real decisions on land sales are at the grass roots level, as these lands, which are later developed into industrial estates, were owned by the villagers. So the township government heads are very influential in land deals,” said the analyst, who asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter.

“Oddly, in Dongguan and some other cities, few officials want to be promoted to higher government positions. No one wants to be thrown out of the decision-making circle for million-dollar land deals. Now, the property sector is under scrutiny, and past collusion between officials and developers is being revealed.”

While almost every city in Guangdong has seen multiple anti-corruption investigations unfold this year, one in particular has riveted public attention.

In Huizhou, a second-tier city some 100km (62 miles) from Dongguan, at least seven out of 10 members of a former municipal leadership committee have been detained in recent years.

The most prominent downfalls involve Chen Yiwei, Huizhou mayor and party boss from 2011 to 2018, who was placed under investigation in July, and Mai Jiaomeng, who served as mayor when Chen was party chief. He was detained in April 2022.

When Chen’s team was in charge, Huizhou’s economic growth stalled. Between 2016-2020, the city’s GDP grew at an average annual rate of 5.5 per cent, compared to as much as 14.1 per cent from 2008 to 2013.

“Despite the many excuses Chen and his team had for the drastic slowdown, Beijing and Guangdong leaders were not happy with their work, especially given infighting between Chen and his subordinate Mai, which became public knowledge in Guangdong,” the analyst at Sun Yat-sen University said “They did not talk to each other even after they were transferred to provincial jobs.”

According to reports from the Guangdong Provincial Discipline Inspection Commission, 109 department-level and 1,321 division-level officials were brought to book in the three quarters to September 30, almost 50 per cent more than the number punished the same period last year.

## What Trump's proposed tariffs against China mean for India

22 November 2024, [Hindustan Times](#), Sriparna Pathak

As the dust begins settling on the United States (US) elections and Donald Trump is now President elect, the world considers the foreign policy challenges and opportunities that arrive with his leadership. For the second largest economy, China, a big source of concern is tariffs against Chinese products. During the campaign trail, Trump had stated that he would impose at least 60% tariffs on Chinese imports and 20% tariffs on imports from all other countries. In 2018 and 2019, the Trump administration had imposed tariffs on approximately \$380 billion worth of Chinese goods, resulting in a tax increase of nearly \$80 billion. The tariffs were implemented under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows the President to impose tariffs in response to unfair trade practices.

Even though China is a major economic partner of the US, it engages in unfair trade practices, which include trade in illicit goods, currency manipulation, theft of sensitive technologies among a long list of others. While the trade war between the US and China is attributed to Donald Trump, fact remains that outgoing President Joe Biden had also taken several measures to protect the American economy from China's unfair trade practices. In May this year, Biden directed his trade representative to increase tariffs under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 on \$18 billion of imports from China to protect American workers and businesses. Biden slapped major new tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (EVs), advanced batteries, solar cells, steel, aluminum and medical equipment. He had stated that Chinese government subsidies ensure that the country's companies do not have to turn a profit, giving them an unfair advantage in global trade; 100% tariffs were slapped on Chinese EVs.

The Biden administration continued from the previous Trump administration and the Trump administration this time will take off from where the Biden administration leaves. Fears of further escalation of trade wars are rife in most countries of the world. With regards to India, while there will be an increase in tariffs against Indian goods, they will not be as steep as those against China's. In this context it becomes pertinent to find out the extent to which India will be able to leverage opportunities out of economic calamities. While the Biden administration slapped tariffs on Chinese products, several agreements to bolster trade and economic ties were signed, ranging from semiconductor fabrication to clean energy transition to defence industrial cooperation, including collaborations on jet engines, munitions, and ground mobility systems, to the "Innovation Handshake" agenda, which promotes cooperation between startups, private equity and venture capital firms,

corporate investment departments, and government officials; to the minerals security partnership to diversify the supply chain for critical minerals; to the green transition fund to hydrogen safety. The two also have a renewable energy technology action platform to enhance collaboration on clean energy manufacturing and global supply chains to the international energy programme.

Even under the Biden administration, the US was cautious towards China and embracing with regards to India. In all probability the trend will continue under the Trump administration. In the 20 years, supply chains across Asia became deeply integrated, and as an example, if a product is manufactured in Taiwan, it would be shipped in China and some component could be made in Thailand or Vietnam. If tariffs are slapped on China, a disruption in trade flows is seen, followed by a reduction in growth. However, India is not so integrated with the Chinese production supply chain. Thus, out of all the major economies in Asia, India would be the least impacted by tariffs against China.

Given constant supply chain disruptions, the China Plus One strategy has emerged in which companies and countries are increasingly pulling out of the Chinese economy to invest elsewhere. In the context of China Plus One, the most commonly mentioned examples are those of India and Vietnam. China is facing the biggest downtrend in its property market. About 737 million square kilometres of real estate is available, and to counter that the Chinese government announced a stimulus over three years, the contours of which are not yet clear. If one invests in China, one will have to bet on specific companies and take tactical bets on those individual names and companies for those with higher risk appetite. As compared to that, under the current Modi administration in India, infrastructure is being built on massive scales and for investing companies, the earnings will be structurally higher and there will be less problems with valuations. Further tariffs on the Chinese economy brings in gloom for the world. However, for India, if strategically manoeuvred then the losses will be low and manageable.

## Biography of a Thought'

22 November 2024, [Tricycle](#), Haley Barker

The contemporary Tibetan painter Tenzing Rigdol on Buddhism versus secularism and his new installation at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Born in Kathmandu, Nepal, to Tibetan refugees, Tenzing Rigdol attended the University of Colorado Denver School of Arts & Media and was awarded a BFA in Painting and Drawing and a BA in Art History. Since graduating, Rigdol has built a career as a



contemporary visual artist working across a range of mediums, including sculpture, painting, collage, performance art, and more. His pieces, infused with sociopolitical undercurrents, often address the pressing issues of today through Himalayan Buddhist imagery. Said pieces have been exhibited internationally at the Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art, Asia Society, Tibet House Gallery, Rossi & Rossi Gallery, Nobel Museum, and Glenbarra Art Museum, to name a few. *Biography of a Thought*, Rigdol's most recent installation, is the centerpiece of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's current exhibit "Mandalas: Mapping the Buddhist Art of Tibet," on view through January 12.



Detail shot of *Biography of a Thought* by Tenzing Rigdol.

Situated in the Robert Lehman Wing, "Mandalas" allows visitors to explore Tibetan devotional art from the 12th to 15th centuries through a series of corridors lined with paintings, sculptures, textiles, instruments, and an array of ritual objects. These early masterworks are juxtaposed with Rigdol's expansive modern installation in the collection's sunlit central gallery. Over five years in the making, *Biography of a Thought* features four thirty-foot-long paintings, a pillar with braille and American Sign Language, as well as as handwoven carpets.

*Tricycle's* Haley Barker recently talked with Rigdol about his oceanic inspirations, the demands of scale, and the universality of different spiritual traditions. For more on "Mandalas: Mapping the Buddhist Art of

Tibet," read Dominique Townsend's recent exhibition review, "[Mandalas at the Met.](#)"

*This interview has been edited for length and clarity.*

**Biography of A Thought is huge, and filled with Buddhist iconography and sociopolitical imagery. How did you approach this commission conceptually?** Basically, Kurt [Behrendt] showed me the space [the Robert Lehman Wing]. He wanted to do a big "Mandala" show. This was before the pandemic. When I saw the space, I thought, "Yeah, I have some ideas." So [the whole process] started over five years ago; it took me about two and a half years to do the study of the composition, then about three years to paint it and to produce the carpet.

At that time, I lived in Astoria, so there's the Atlantic Ocean. For months, I would always go there and look at the ocean. I would look at small parts of the ocean, and then try to study how it breathes. Then the main composition was going to be waves and the clouds. Clouds are like the thoughts, and waves are like the emotions. You weave the two stories and ideas together, and that was the idea.

**OK, so you took inspiration from the ocean. I see it, because your piece is very blue, and the clouds are rich and colorful.** Like the thoughts! You know, our thoughts are sometimes vibrant, sometimes dull—sometimes thoughts are all gathering [together], almost like [they are] talking to each other. I thought it would be interesting to represent thoughts as clouds, and there are many Buddhist references there too. I played with that iconography.

**Are there specific details of the composition that stick out to you, or that are your favorites?** Not really, because interestingly, there are three ways to install it. One way to install it is to put all the paintings together into one painting, and it's 120 feet long. Another way of composing it is having a central piece, and all the surrounding pieces become a circle. And then the third way of presenting it is where it's opened up on four walls, like you're entering my mind—basically like the Buddhist idea of tantra. In Buddhism, too, you have three ways of experiencing the teachings: through Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana. I play with that. And since it's one complete composition, the idea is to really pay attention to every corner of each percentage of the painting. So there's no picking [a favorite]. If something works, it's because other things are supporting it. We look at the totality of it.

**I see! Going off that, can you speak a bit about how the size of this work changed or challenged your creation process?** In a way, it did. Initially, we were thinking of starting with one painting, then two paintings, maybe four paintings. Then the size really was dictated by how strong the light was coming into the space. The walls are very intimidating, in a way. They are very big walls. If I had small pieces, like four small paintings, it wouldn't work. So it grew in that

way. Within a few months, we realized it had to be *big* in order to fit the space. Many things were dictated by the space. And the idea needed a fixed space so that I could explore it properly, with what you call “complete satisfaction.”

**I read in your interview with Behrendt that you had to get a whole new studio space to work on this, because it had to be big enough to accommodate the size of everything.** I wanted to have a studio that had almost the same light. That’s sunlight, so I built a studio in Nepal on the fifth floor, and I had all the surrounding walls be only windows. I had all the sunlight coming in. In that way, I built a whole studio that fits the thirty-foot paintings.

**And you were working in that studio, specifically, for three years?** Yeah, three years—my retreat. I call it an art retreat. I think tantra is all about one’s ability to pay attention, and what attention means, and how one can harness it. That kind of subject matter would naturally demand a quiet place to explore and execute. It’s almost like you’re painting while there’s an egg on your head. You really slowly calm yourself.

**What did you learn about yourself through making this piece?** I learned how to slow down. That was very difficult. And to release effort. But I think it’s not that you’re *learning* but you’re actually *discovering*. Maybe you’re learning how to be calm, but that leads you to discover things about yourself that are already there. I think what I learned or discovered is that it’s amazing to just paint and spend time on something that big.

**There are so many details to the composition, so many little Easter eggs in every single corner. Can you take us through some of it?** You can enter the room from any space. After a while, you start seeing simple repetition. Then you notice somewhere that the waves are fluctuating, the clouds are more vibrant. Slowly the clouds and waves settle. So the initial experience is immersive. It’s something that somebody who doesn’t really know anything about Buddhism can experience—energy.

The first panel talks about natural phenomena. It talks about the environment on a surface level; air pollution, water pollution, deforestation. But at the same time, at a deeper level, it talks about our awareness, being thrown into this world, being here. And all the symbols are very hidden, like how tantric texts are. The second panel talks about what happens when the mind gets wild. Suffering—not who created it or how it is in this country or anything like that—but *just* suffering and how people respond to it. In one of the paintings [on this panel], I used this old picture of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. He was giving an exam and debating right in front of Potala. I removed the monk he was debating, and I put a Chinese hat there. It is talking about how many people are so violent right now, but there are also some people who believe in dialogue and nonviolence as a

solution. So this second panel really is about *vritti*. We call it modulation. Vibration.

All my artworks are like a stage for the mind to dance. And on the third panel, you start seeing how to stabilize the mind, how to look at identity. I used Picasso’s five women [*Les Femmes d’Alger*]. People say, “Oh, they’re from the brothel,” and this and that. So I re-created it and added the five primordial Buddha’s colors. And I added the five mental faculties that he was offering. When you properly tune the five mental faculties, you see they’re all buddhas. In a way, I’m saying your soul doesn’t have a gender; [the same is true of] your *atman* or *rigpa* or whatever you call it. You’re much more than your thoughts and body. That was one of the tantric teachings. And then the fourth panel is calmness.

My friend is an Indian scholar. He wanted to know about the painting. In a very simple way, I explained it like this: In the *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*, the second yoga, *Chitta*, is the first panel. *Vritti* is the second, *nirodha* is the third, and the fourth is the *yoga*. [laughs] You can look at it in so many ways, but I’m just giving you the general melody. If you go into detail, it’s crazy. I remember once I went with Kurt and Mike [Hearn], I think we talked about it for three and a half hours.

**How do you see people engaging with the piece?** I think most of the people that come have no memory of Buddha, so it’s very interesting. They respond to just the melody of it. It’s almost like you go to a country where you don’t speak any language and you don’t know the content of it, but you know the melody. And sometimes, many people come, especially elders and kids, and they don’t ask much. They just walk around, and they hug, and some elders cry and they just say, ‘thank you.’ I don’t know what they understood. I don’t know what I told them. Sometimes I say all my artworks are like a stage for the mind to dance. I create a stage, and I create that stage as smooth and as effortlessly as possible. And hopefully each individual brings their own mind, and then they dance around, and then they explore the plot. And in the end, what they’re exploring is themselves. So whatever one sees, it is seen through their own history, experiences, and interests.

**I’ve read that you consider much of your work to be secular, even though a lot of your work uses some pretty overt Buddhist motifs. So how does Buddhism inform your work, or the creation of it, and how do you square that with your intention to be more inclusive?** I have always visited places or institutions to really learn something. You don’t go there to feel like you belong. Let’s say you’re a *thangka* painter, and if you think about yourself as a *thangka* painter, then you’ll start seeing everything like a *thangka*. That’s not freedom, because you’re looking at it from a specific angle. Sometimes, even being a Buddhist, I also might



not have the most perfect vantage point, because you can think, 'I am a Buddhist, they are non-Buddhist.' You can go even more fundamental. To whom did Buddha prostrate? I think his teaching was for us to become like him. And he bowed down to basic principles. In that way, Buddhism helped me look at all the other religions together.

**I see. Buddhism is the vessel that allows you to see things differently and make different connections.** Yes. You know, it's like if the 7 train goes out to Jackson Heights, Queens, it also goes back to Manhattan too. So it's not 'Buddhism is very special.' It's just that all religions are like different subway stations. When you combine all the stations, it's like one circle—like prayer beads!

I was brought up with Tibetan culture, and I naturally have more information about it. But, of course, I see suffering in Kashmir. I see suffering in Hong Kong. I see suffering in different places, and I see Mount Tibet in those places. I'm talking about a kind of universality. It's happening everywhere. Tibet is everywhere. The injustice, suffering, discomfort, disease is everywhere. And every country has its own homework to do. I think it's time to look within oneself, one's own country.

### Has Trump-fear driven China to be conciliatory towards India?

22 November 2024, [Tibetan Review](#)

As China-hawk Donald Trump ascends the US presidency, come Jan 20, good relationship with India is becoming particularly important for Beijing. As geographical neighbours and the two most populous countries in the world, China and India not only face similar challenges, but also share extensive common interests, said the official *globaltimes.cn* Nov 21 in an editorial.

This may explain why from being reportedly stubbornly unyielding on withdrawing its troops from Depsang and Demchok incursions in eastern Ladakh over numerous rounds of border talks at various levels, despite a series of strong moves from India that adversely affected its interests in the country, China agreed to a seemingly sudden border patrolling agreement on these areas on Oct 21, to be preceded by disengagement and followed by de-escalation and restoration of trust leading to normalization of bilateral ties.

For China-India relations to become more stable, it is essential for both governments to maintain dialogue, strengthen economic ties, and promote cultural and personnel exchanges, the editorial said.

Still, the editorial maintained that the strength of the momentum for improvement in bilateral relations in the future will largely depend on the sincerity of the Indian side. It expressed hope that India can allow consensus, rather than differences, to shape China-

India relations. This obviously referred to New Delhi's conditioning of restoration of normal bilateral ties to China's withdrawal, first of all, from the Depsang and Demchok incursions.

China's response to Trump's "America first" approach that envisages huge tariffs on imports from it will demand not only a strong domestic market but also engagement with all possible international stakeholders, the *scmp.com* Nov 22 cited Zhu Xian, a former World Bank vice-president and a former deputy head of the Shanghai-headquartered New Development Bank (NDB), as saying. This obviously also means healing its seriously frayed ties with India, the world's fifth largest economy with a consumer base of over 1.4 billion.

Zhu has also maintained, however, that the looming threats posed by Trump's tariff and climate policies could also open a window of opportunity for Beijing to elevate its global profile and move the needle on issues such as increasing the international role of China's currency, the yuan.

Still, that "depends on whether Beijing can bring forward an agenda ... that can be supported by other developing countries, new emerging economies or even some developed nations," the development finance veteran has said in an interview with the Post. The report noted that on the campaign trail, Trump had raised eyebrows around the world with his threats to impose tariffs of 60 to 100% on imports from China and of 10 to 20% on products from other countries. While it is argued that US consumers will end up paying for those high tariffs, their effect on Chinese exports due to reduced demands also cannot be underestimated.

### Nepal PM K P Oli's Beijing visit may not win him points at home

22 November 2024, [The Indian Express](#), Yubaraj Ghimire

*Oli was a hero back home when he signed the Trade and Treaty agreement with Beijing during the 2015 economic blockade. But this time, India's "sin" was insignificant. It simply chose not to welcome him in Delhi and for that he enjoys no sympathy in the country.*

There are several hopes and fears about the likely outcomes of Nepal PM K P Oli's five-day visit to China beginning December 2. This will be the fourth time that Oli, as PM, has made the first bilateral visit after assuming office to Beijing rather than Delhi, in contrast to the generally followed practice of going to Delhi first. The latter was seen as an endorsement of the view that the relationship with India is more "special".

Oli's and Narendra Modi's governments have clashed twice in the past nine years — first over Nepal's constitution and then on territory. At this point, Delhi still seems keen to work closely with the Nepali actors — it's just not that comfortable with Oli. The fact that India chose not to invite Oli but entertain Foreign Affairs Minister Arzu Rana Deuba — who belongs to the Nepali Congress — during her visit to Delhi in August at the highest level has made the current PM and the Communist Party suspicious of Delhi's intent.



*Oli's first tenure which began in October 2015 witnessed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal for over four months. (File Photo)*

Oli's first tenure which began in October 2015 witnessed an unofficial economic blockade on Nepal for over four months. Then came the bitter territorial disputes over the as-yet unresolved areas in Lipulek, Limpiyadhura and Kalapani. Delhi's reluctance to invite him this time is perceived as a hangover of this past bitterness and a sign that it has not forgiven Oli for signing the trade and transit framework agreements with China, ending Nepal's exclusive dependence on the south for maritime access.

The larger question is: Has there been an erosion of the "special relationship" between India and Nepal? The unique open border is now seen as a law and order threat, with terrorist actors also being reported to exploit it at times. Traditionally, Nepal has been a Hindu-majority society with deep ties to the Puri Shankaracharya Mutt. In reciprocity, Nepal's kings — until the abolition of the monarchy 16 years ago — were given the special privilege of having access to India's important Hindu shrines including Rameshwaram, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Ayodhya and Jagannath Puri. Nepal's royal palace used to send the first ingredients for preparing "khichri" as the mahaprasad for the annual Gorakhanath mela that takes place in Gorakhpur each year in the month of Magh (mid-January to mid-Feb). Nepal's transition to a secular republic brought an end to these practices, which also served as leverage and openings during diplomatic crises.

Nepal has suffered political instability, with 36 Prime Ministers in the past 35 years. Three leaders — Oli of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist

Leninist), Sher Bahadur Deuba (Nepali Congress) and Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' (Maoist Centre) — have alternated in the post in the last nine years since the constitution's promulgation. Instability and frequently changing political equations, solely driven by power, have also resulted in policy inconsistencies, and loss of confidence from both domestic and multinational investors.

Oli and the current establishment are facing public wrath, especially on corruption issues.

This background, and India not sending him the invitation first, makes his China visit more interesting. Both the US and India have warned Nepal not to go for BRI projects to avoid a debt trap. Nepali Congress, the dominant partner in the coalition, seems to have taken this prescription as a mantra and has warned Oli not to sign the BRI execution framework treaty during his visit except under the condition that all these projects will be fully grant-based.

Oli's failure to sign such an agreement with China, something he seems to have already assured, will lead to a loss of credibility. On the other hand, bypassing the Nepali Congress's suggestion and upsetting two external stakeholders may cost him his chair back home.

China may not be willing to make an exception for Nepal under the BRI, but there are indications that it may defer by a few years the date (2026) for Nepal to pay instalments on a \$220 million dollar loan to build the Pokhara international Airport — which is lying idle ever since it was inaugurated two years ago. China has time and again turned down Nepal's plea to convert this loan into a grant but it has indicated flexibility on readjusting terms and dates.

Oli is known for taking risks — some even politically suicidal at times. His visit to Beijing may just backfire. He was a hero back home when he had signed the Trade and Treaty agreement with Beijing during the 2015 economic blockade. But this time, India's "sin" was insignificant. It simply chose not to welcome him in Delhi and for that he enjoys no sympathy in the country.

### **'Trashing' Scientific Warnings, China Is Constructing Three Upstream Dams In Tibet; A Disaster In The Making?**

22 November 2024, [Eurasian Times](#), Shubhangi Palve

China is proceeding with the construction of massive hydropower dams on the upper reaches of the Machu (Yellow River) in Tibet despite mounting scientific concerns about potential geological disasters and severe environmental consequences.

A recent report by Turquoise Roof, a collaborative research network focused on Tibet, has raised alarms over these large-scale infrastructure projects.

For the first time, China is building hydropower dams upstream in Tibet, targeting the sources of Asia's major rivers. The report highlights the construction of at least three significant dams on the upper Machu River.

The Machu River, known as the Huang He in Chinese, is also known as the "Sorrow of China" because of the devastating floods it has caused.

This region, already seismically unstable and heavily impacted by climate change, poses substantial risks, yet China continues its dam-building efforts in this delicate environment.

#### The Yellow River's Significance

The Yellow River, or Machu River in Tibet, is a vital waterway that spans northern China. Known as the "Mother River" in China, it is the second-longest river in China and the sixth-longest river system globally.

The Yellow River, often referred to as the "world's muddiest river," is notorious for its high sediment content. This heavy sediment buildup has earned it another nickname, the "hanging river," as the accumulated silt raises riverbed sections above the surrounding landscape. Over time, this accumulation has caused the river to change its course, resulting in frequent and devastating floods.

Over a third of the river's course lies in Tibet, where it flows nearly 2,000 kilometers across the Amdo region in northern Tibet. Originating on 'the Bayan Har Mountains' – the Tibet-Qinghai Plateau (15,000 feet), the Yellow River runs eastward through seven Chinese provinces: Qinghai, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, and Shandong, before emptying into the Bo Hai Gulf in the Yellow Sea.

The Yellow River comprises three distinct sections: the upper course through mountainous terrain, the middle course across a plateau, and the lower course flowing through a low plain.

The combination of its massive sediment load and unpredictable course makes the Yellow River both a crucial waterway and an environmental hazard.

#### Why Are Hydropower Dams In The Upstream Of Rivers Dangerous?

**Climate Change:** Chinese scientists warn that the combined effects of intense human activity and adverse climate change have led to significant ecological and environmental problems in the upper reaches of the Yellow River. These issues have jeopardized the region's ecological security and power supply.

Building a series of dams, or a cascade, requires raising captive water levels high enough to reach the bottom of the next dam upriver. This transforms a once fast-moving mountain river into a series of man-made lakes, each tightly positioned against its upstream neighbor.

To achieve this, dams must be among the world's tallest, standing 300 to 400 meters high. If one dam

fails, a catastrophic chain reaction could potentially trigger the collapse of successive dams, much like a tsunami of water.

**Danger To The Permafrost Zone:** Building dams at high altitudes in Tibet presents another risk: thawing permafrost. Tibet's permafrost zone is the largest outside the Arctic, and construction on this unstable ground presents a significant challenge. As the permafrost thaws each summer and freezes again in winter, the shifting subsoil may threaten the dam's stability.

Additionally, as permafrost melts across 1.6 million square kilometers of the Tibetan plateau, methane—much more potent than carbon dioxide as a greenhouse gas—is released into the atmosphere. China has no clear policies or measures in place to address these methane emissions, exacerbating climate change.

**Coal-Fired Power Plants:** While China positions itself as a leader in clean energy, it is still the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. In the first half of 2024, China led the globe in constructing new coal-fired power plants.

Despite the presence of renewable energy sources, the report shows that coal-fired power plants dominate the region's power grid, highlighting China's continued reliance on fossil fuels. This reliance contradicts its claims of aggressive decarbonization.

While hydropower is considered renewable, large-scale hydropower projects have significant environmental and social consequences, including disruption of ecosystems and displacement of communities. China's strategy of combining hydropower with coal power may be a way to present a cleaner energy profile without addressing the deeper ecological impacts.

**Devastation Of Local Communities:** The impact on local Tibetan communities has been severe. According to the report, The Yangkhil (Yangqu) hydropower station, the first major dam built upriver on the Machu, has destroyed an entire Tibetan community. Eyewitness accounts detail the forced dismantling of homes and the destruction of a monastery, which was removed from the protected heritage list before demolition.

While Chinese engineers boast about using AI-driven robots in construction, these technological advancements come at a high human cost.

The report also highlights that in February, Tibetans risked their lives to protest the Kamtok (Chinese: Gangtuo) dam being built on the upper Drichu (Yangtze) River. The dam directly threatens their homes and six historic monasteries, which house priceless 14th-century frescoes that Chinese scholars have long sought to preserve.

#### Tibet's Rivers Under Siege

Before this, In January 2023, satellite images confirmed that China was constructing a new dam on the Mabja Zangbo River in Tibet, a tributary of the Indian Ganga River.

This river lies near the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and Tibet. Construction of the dam, which began in May 2021, is located approximately 16 km north of this tri-junction, opposite Uttarakhand's Kalapani territory.

This development has raised significant concerns for downriver nations, India and Nepal, especially as China has been increasing its military and dual-use infrastructure along both the eastern and western sectors of the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

As highlighted by the Turquoise Roof report, China's hydropower projects upstream of the Yellow River also have significant downstream impacts, affecting farmers and fisherfolk in countries like Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar.

The far-reaching consequences of these projects underscore the risks of unchecked infrastructure development in ecologically sensitive regions.

This aggressive dam construction in Tibet's fragile ecosystem represents a significant shift in China's infrastructure development strategy, raising serious concerns about long-term environmental sustainability and regional stability.

### Words Used for Cultural Genocide: How "Northern Frontier" Is Replacing "Inner Mongolia"

21 November 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), Zeng Liqin

They are starting with adjectives. "Mongolian culture" becomes mandatorily "Northern Frontier culture."

The Uyghurs told us so. Many Southern Mongolians perhaps did not understand why Uyghurs insist that the word "Xinjiang" should not be used and should be replaced by "East Turkestan." "Xinjiang" means "New Frontier," a term denying Uyghur history and identity. It looks like the only defining feature of the Uyghur land was to serve as the new frontier of China, once it was occupied by the Chinese.

Now the Mongolian inhabitants of what is officially called the "autonomous region of Inner Mongolia"—they prefer to use "Southern Mongolia"—are being treated with the same medicine. If East Turkestan is the "New Frontier" (Xinjiang) Southern Mongolia is now being called "Northern Frontier" (Beijiang, 北疆). The strategy used is to attack the substantive through the adjective. So far, the name of the pseudo-autonomous region is still "Inner Mongolia." However, the adjective "Inner Mongolian" is increasingly replaced by "of the Northern Frontier." And this is virtually mandatory when the noun for which the adjective is used is "culture," in this context the most important noun of them all.

The Chinese Communist Party since 2023 regards as official the use of "Beijiang wenhua" (北疆文化), "Northern Frontier Culture," instead of "Inner Mongolian Culture," or even "Mongolian Culture," referred to what after all is one of China's officially recognized ethnic minorities.

The CCP regional propaganda office has established an academic journal dedicated to "Northern Frontier Culture," and Inner Mongolia's main state-run academic institute has opened a "Northern Frontier Research Centre."



An image of the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Committee of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region CCP (2023). Screenshot.

The campaign, now in full swing, was inaugurated last year at the Sixth Plenary Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> Committee of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region CCP, held in Hohhot from July 3 to 5, 2023. The CCP wanted to "launch the brand 'Northern Frontier Culture,'" with the purpose of emphasizing that the culture of the autonomous region is "Chinese" rather than "Mongolian." It is argued that it is the product of the fusion of the different ethnic cultures of the region under the unifying principle of "being grateful to the Party, listening to the Party, and following the Party."

Following campaigns to replace Mongolian language with Chinese in the region's education and administration, the semantic shift is clearly part of a project aimed at "Sinicizing" Mongolians and eliminating their distinctive cultural, religious, and ethnic heritage.

### Why Is China's Atheist Regime Trying to Pick The Next Dalai Lama?

19 November 2024, [Tipp Insights](#), Bryan Burack and Jack Erickson

The Chinese Communist Party is preparing to hijack an ancient faith. Freedom-loving people can't let it succeed.

In early September, dozens of high-ranking Tibetan Buddhist monks and religious scholars gathered in the Chinese city of Lanzhou to discuss reincarnation, a major tenet of their faith. Observers would be understandably perplexed by how the

participants “emphasized the importance” of the approval of China’s communist regime “in the recognition of reincarnated Tibetan religious leaders.” The mystery has a simple, sinister answer: The meeting was organized by the Chinese Communist Party itself, through the Buddhist Association of China, a part of its United Front Work Department, which controls all religious expression in China.

Shamefully, the atheist CCP is attempting to reach into the afterlife to seize control of religious leaders that have escaped its grasp on earth.

The CCP’s paranoia and brutality falls heavily on people of faith in China, and Tibetan Buddhists are among the most abused. The CCP’s efforts to wipe out Tibetans’ identity and establish complete control over their lives are thought to constitute crimes against humanity, and Tibet was a proving ground for techniques of repression used in the CCP’s genocide against the Uyghurs.

The CCP is intensely hostile toward the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism’s highest spiritual leader, who escaped to India following the CCP’s annexation of Tibet in the 1950s. Since then, the Dalai Lama has been an active proponent of greater autonomy for Tibetans, founding the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet’s government-in-exile based in northern India.

For the CCP, Tibetans’ veneration of the Dalai Lama constitutes a threat to its control over Tibet, which has seen periods of unrest incited by CCP repression. The future of the dalai lama as an institution is therefore linked to the future of Tibet itself.

Next year, the Dalai Lama turns 90 and is expected to announce plans for his reincarnation and succession. He has remarked that he may reincarnate outside of China, leaving the next dalai lama outside Chinese government control. He has also considered the possibility of choosing a successor while still alive. That would represent a break with the more common Buddhist tradition, whereby after the death of the dalai lama, a council of senior religious figures identifies a young boy as his successor and reincarnation.

The Dalai Lama has also suggested he may reincarnate as a woman, or even forgo reincarnation altogether.

For the CCP, the Dalai Lama’s succession is an opportunity to seize even tighter control of the Tibetan Buddhist faith and ensure its practitioners no longer have a spiritual leader to look to beyond China’s borders and outside the CCP’s reach. The CCP has been preparing to hijack the Dalai Lama’s succession for decades.

In 1995, the Dalai Lama identified a young boy in Tibet as the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, the second-ranking religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Almost immediately thereafter, the CCP forcibly disappeared the then-6-year-old child, who has not been seen since. The CCP then appointed its own Panchen Lama.

In 2007, the Chinese government released regulations stipulating that “[n]o group or individual may without authorization carry out any activities related to searching for or recognizing reincarnating living Buddha soul children.” In recent years, China has emphasized that the reincarnation of the dalai lama “must comply with Chinese laws and regulations.”

The United States recently enacted the Resolve Tibet Act, bipartisan legislation disputing the PRC’s misleading historical claims over Tibet and urging Beijing to agree to talks with the Dalai Lama’s representatives. In June, a bipartisan congressional delegation met with the Dalai Lama in northern India, warning that China is “trying to erase [Tibetans’] culture ... . They are trying something that we cannot let them get away with.”

India also has a stake in preventing CCP subversion of the Dalai Lama’s succession. Aside from hosting Tibet’s government-in-exile, India’s Tawang district sits within what was once part of the historical Tibetan nation and was the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. It’s also the site of one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in the world. Beijing has opposed the Dalai Lama’s visits to Tawang, as China claims the district as part of a broader “South Tibet.”

Although India’s deliberations surrounding the Dalai Lama’s succession have largely remained muted, a former Indian ambassador to China stated that India wouldn’t be “comfortable with China trying to control that process.”

With the Dalai Lama’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthday next July, discussion over his succession will come to a head soon. The CCP has been preparing for decades to turn the next dalai lama into a tool to advance Beijing’s interests. The U.S. government is well aware of this plan. In its statement marking the Dalai Lama’s 89<sup>th</sup> birthday, the State Department reiterated its support for Tibetans’ “ability to freely choose and venerate religious leaders without interference.”

But more than platitudes will be required, and the U.S. should be engaging now with representatives from the Dalai Lama’s office, the Tibetan government in exile, and the Indian government to better prepare for the succession.

The Chinese Communist Party cannot be allowed to quash the religious freedom of the Tibetan people and Buddhists worldwide.

**Debotri Dhar | With India’s lead, Brics can be a voice for Global South Columnists**

18 November 2024, [The Asian Age](#), Debotri Dhar

The 16th Brics summit, held in Kazan, Russia, on October 22-24, is the talk of the town. Brics (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) is an inter-



governmental body for the promotion of multilateralism, peace, security and economic development. Its first summit in 2009 included founding members Brazil, Russia, India and China, with South Africa joining a year later. Brics expanded this year to include four new members, and 30 more nations have applied for membership. Talks were held this year for an alternative financial model to challenge the West-led Bretton Woods global monetary system, comprising the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, as well as a push for a united front to advocate for United Nations Security Council reforms.

So, is Brics poised to become the cool new Global South club -- or is it a harbinger of a stridently anti-Western world order? For Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Brics summit was an obvious opportunity to push back against Western sanctions over Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including Washington's efforts to choke off financial supplies to Moscow, and to lobby for support from the Global South. Pertinently, the "Global South" is not just a geographical but a geopolitical and socio-economic grouping. Many Global South nations are in the Southern Hemisphere, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, often sharing colonised histories that led to economic exploitation for centuries. That many of these emerging economies did not blacklist Russia has been misinterpreted by some Western analysts as the Global South's backing for Moscow's Ukraine policy. Instead, it more accurately reflects a growing disenchantment with the West, a tacit critique of what many erstwhile colonised nations see as Western double standards on wars and imperialism, and the selective (mis)use of human rights for other agendas, therefore pursuing their own politico-economic interests as non-aligned nations. Or multi-aligned, when it comes to India's international relations. Fellow Indians of varying political beliefs hold diverse opinions on Nato, but I have not met anyone who approves of Russia's invasion. Rather, there is a sense of a historical friendship with Russia among many, that Moscow has not harmed India's interests, and a refusal to bear the costs of a war created by others. From a geo-strategic viewpoint, given the strengthening Russia-China partnership, a continued relationship with Moscow is useful for India to counter-balance Chinese expansionism in the Indo-Pacific. Following the recent breakthrough border agreement between India and China ahead of the Brics summit, there is speculation in some quarters that Moscow may have lent a helping hand to defuse hostilities between the two Asian giants. Under this Sino-Indian agreement, outstanding issues simmering since the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes are being resolved, with both sides agreeing to a patrolling arrangement allowing for the return of Indian troops to what became friction points on the

Line of Actual Control (LAC). In what is a major diplomatic win for India, tensions in Demchok and Depsang in eastern Ladakh have been addressed with military de-escalation in these areas. With this well-timed beginning to the summit, followed by a meeting of prominent leaders from the Global South, the worldwide interest generated by Brics is unsurprising. Some critiques have also been directed at how Brics is a very loose formation of nations with vastly diverging interests. While Beijing and Moscow see Brics as a platform to challenge the Western-led world order in general, and the dominance of the American dollar in particular, this is not the case with India, which is not anti-West and sees Brics as an alternative outfit to better support and negotiate for the concerns of the Global South, as compared to elite clubs such as the G-7 which were not designed to advocate for emerging economy perspectives.

While Brics membership is less homogenous than the G-7, whose members all meet common developmental criteria, even the G-7 is not unmarked by internal disagreements. Examples are some of France's foreign policy positions independent of the United States, as on the Israel-Palestine war, or Italy's policy disagreements with France, as on not sending domestic troops to fight in the Russia-Ukraine war. Yet the G-7 has, despite such internal dissent, been able to focus on a larger vision, consolidating the group's economic and geopolitical power over time. This is the bigger challenge ahead for Brics. That there is a tremendous need to advocate for emerging economy perspectives so that powerful blocs do not unilaterally dictate terms to the Global South is apparent from the sheer number of countries applying for Brics membership. Now the group will need a clearer vision. Will there be any economic requirements (such as GDP levels) for entry into Brics? Will smaller member-nations that are attacked be diplomatically supported in peace efforts and provided humanitarian aid? Countries in the Global South have historically been criticised for having weak democratic institutions, but the truth is that democracy in the West also needs strengthening. Brics as a non-Western body can shape a more representative global order, with the caveat that a just, democratic world is challenging to build with authoritarian states or those which promote terrorism. Peace and security are objectives of Brics, yet some members have long been under strife, with vulnerable populations being greatly impacted. My public commentaries and lectures have, for years, analysed gender violence in war, such as the decades-long US-Russia war over Afghanistan, with the Soviet invasion of 1979 followed by American Cold War era foreign policies on arming religious extremists, resulting in the rise of the Taliban, with disastrous consequences for socio-economic development and

women's rights in Afghanistan. Another example is how the real threat of wartime rape in some Global South nations like Syria results in families marrying off girls aged ten or twelve, compounding high regional maternal and infant mortality rates. As Brics is being celebrated by the developing world, the Women, Peace and Security Agenda to mainstream gender into peace and security multilateral architecture has also recently celebrated its 24th anniversary. The point is that the economic and social indicators of development often work better together. India-US collaboration to counter Chinese military aggression in the Indo-Pacific will continue under Donald Trump, whose recent victory in the US presidential election will have other far-reaching policy consequences, including US involvement in the two global wars. A democratic India that can unite Brics to reflect non-Western development aspirations and draw upon strategic relationships with the Western and Russia-China blocs to provide diplomatic, humanitarian support to end wars justly will be very well-positioned to play a leading role for Brics, the Global South, and the world.

### **Nepal's New PM Oli Is Going To China, Why Is He Not Coming To India?**

18 November 2024, [StratNews Global](#), Surya Gangadharan

Is too much being made of the China visit of Nepal's Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli from Dec 2-6? This is important for every time Nepal gets a new prime minister, the first trip he makes is to Delhi.

But for some reason, Oli has not merited an invitation even though his Foreign Minister Arzu Rana Deuba, was in Delhi in August and invited Prime Minister Modi to Kathmandu.

Was it a protocol lapse that Modi did not extend an invitation to Oli at that meeting? Or was it deliberate? Was Delhi conveying some subtle displeasure? It's hard to say and the MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) has maintained silence.

Veteran Nepali journalist Yubaraj Ghimire told Stratnewsglobal over the phone from Kathmandu, that in his understanding, Modi and Oli had met for about half an hour at the UN General Assembly in New York.

"It was not a one-on-one meeting," Ghimire says, "and Modi had told Oli he planned to come to Kathmandu but there was nothing about inviting him to Delhi."

He says India is committed to the Nepali Congress (NC), which is in coalition with Oli's CPN (UML). By meeting Arzu Rana Deuba, wife of NC leader and former prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, India was underscoring its support for that party.

Ghimire believes India would prefer that the NC and Maoist leader Prachanda come together rather than the current arrangement.

Former Indian diplomats who have served in Nepal, were wary about commenting on the possible reasons for not inviting Oli. But one warned that if Oli chose to interpret this as a snub, "there would be no shortage of people and groups in Kathmandu who could turn the heat on the bilateral relationship."

India's familiarity born of culture and access, has traditionally made it an easy target. This was the case even during the days of the monarchy and those habits did not die with it. But there is a view in Kathmandu which is at variance with this argument.

Nepal's former ambassador to Denmark, Vijay Kant Karna, wondered why every newly anointed Nepali prime minister has to travel overseas, whether to Delhi, Beijing or elsewhere and even more so in the present case.

"Leaving aside Arzu Rana Deuba's visit in August, India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar was in Kathmandu earlier this year in January and there were important outcomes including on the export of 10,000MW of electricity to India, cross-border power linkages and so on. When so much has already been decided upon, what is an Oli visit expected to deliver," he asked.

There is the border dispute over Kalapani, Lipulekh and Limpiyadhura which peaked in 2019, when Oli was prime minister, and has simmered since then. No resolution is in sight.

With regard to China, Karna also questioned the rationale for that visit.

"China has not been forthcoming on budgetary support for Nepal, amounting to around \$200 million," he said, "and this despite regular reminders. Nor is there any movement on the BRI projects first announced in 2017 and reiterated during every VIP visit since then."

The latter is because the NC insists that the projects be funded through grants and concessional loans while China is only offering commercial loans. Result the BRI Implementation Plan has not moved forward.

Is there a hidden Indian hand here, one can only speculate. A corner stone of India's policy in Nepal is not to have two communist or left-wing parties together in Kathmandu. That would add infinitely to China's leverage.

The current NC-CPN(UML) arrangement is better than the above option, but Oli may not enjoy high levels of trust in Delhi given how he brought the Kalapani border issue to the fore in the bilateral relationship.

His proximity to China is another irritant although he's been low profile on that relationship since taking over as prime minister. But with Beijing on his radar in December, that maybe about to change.

## How attacks on Chinese working for CPEC projects dent China-Pakistan ties

17 November 2024, [First Post](#), Tara Kartha

*That the Chinese have felt the need to hire private security is perplexing when the Pakistan army has granted itself a huge rise in the budget ostensibly to take care of their security*

There appears to be some rusting in a certain 'iron brother' relationship. A spat of no common order had erupted recently when the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan warned the authorities that their patience was at an end with regard to attacks on Chinese workers in the country.

The Foreign Office spokesperson, equally unusually, took umbrage instead of quietly accepting the (justified) criticism, all of which raised eyebrows across the circles that matter in both countries. Now it seems matters may have been smoothed out. Just a day ago, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian, while reiterating the 'all-weather friendship' motif, also stated, "We (China) are firm in our commitment to protecting the safety and security of Chinese nationals.." rather mysteriously also stating, "Attempts to undermine the mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries will not succeed". There was also a distinct threat, that terrorists would 'pay the price'. The poor Baloch better look out.

### **The Chinese are unusually annoyed**

All of this needs some explanation. There is no doubt at all that Beijing has every right to get completely annoyed. Ambassador Jiang Zaidong observes that "Top priority should be the security of Chinese personnel because they come to Pakistan to participate in the country's development," adding that the Chinese "don't deserve this kind of sacrifice..." There have been two serious attacks in a month's time, with not just the attack on the bus at the Jinnah airport just before the meeting of the SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) but also an unusual attack by a security guard in Karachi. That was apparently the result of an altercation between a group of Chinese nationals and the security.

Anyway, some 16 rounds were fired, which indicates quite a mess. The Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, has assured the ambassador that he was 'personally' managing the situation. It may be noted that relations on the ground between the two sides have had problems, given the huge cultural differences. Pakistanis often complain of marked racism among the Chinese and a contempt for locals.

A letter from the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), Syed Asad Raza, to the chairman of the All Pakistan Security Agencies Association (APSA) is revealing. It shows the Chinese have taken to hiring their own security people rather than relying on the Pakistanis. These are locals, and as the DIG says, their

training is not of the highest order, and their knowledge of 'foreigners' is minimal. But that the Chinese even feel the need to hire private security is perplexing. In a largely unnoticed move, the Pakistan army has granted itself a huge rise in the budget ostensibly to take care of their security.

### **Spike in Attacks**

There is no doubt that the numbers of attacks have risen recently. From about an attack a year earlier, 3 in 2021, and then a jump to 4 attacks in March 2024, is enough to cause serious concern. But here's the curious part. In early October this year, the Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet sanctioned Rs 35 of Rs 45 billion to the army in a supplementary grant. That's rather a lot. This is the second such grant, after another Rs 60 billion for Operation Azm-e-Istehkam, all of which is above the Rs 2.127 trillion defence budget. As yet unclear is another Rs 45 billion for 'approved projects' for the army. The body also approved Rs 16 billion for the Special Security Division South and another Rs 8 billion for a similar division in the south, both of which are responsible for protecting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in southern regions. All this means a near doubling of the defence budget, at a time when the International Monetary Fund is rapping Islamabad on the knuckles for a current account deficit and still reviewing its performance.

### **Pakistan Army gets a financial boost**

There is one possible clue to both the sudden bounty in Pakistan army coffers and the relatively softer position of China towards Pakistani issues. Beijing has been insisting for some time that it bring its own security agencies into the country, including supporting intelligence. Towards this, it seems it has proposed a joint company for CPEC Phase 2 and a security agreement to firm this up.

Pakistan has so far resisted this, given that this would mean a definite erosion of its sovereignty. No country likes other people's intelligence roaming freely around the country. Now it is possible that this has been done, which may align with the sudden affluence apparent in the budget. True, the Pakistan army has multiple sources of income, some from its business empire inside the country and outside it.

Ayesha Jehangir estimates its empire at about \$38 billion, not counting the extensive private empires of its senior officers, like former chief Gen. Bajwa, whose family became billionaires in just six years. Reports like this also link the military generals to CPEC ventures, which means they are committed to them lock, stock, and barrel. A little loss of sovereignty may not bother them. Or else they are so compromised they have little choice.

### **End result**

Either way, Delhi needs to look out. First, there are going to be more Chinese security officials within

Pakistan, who know well how to use the tech that they have given to the Pakistanis. That includes “Smart City” projects that include hundreds of cameras placed in major cities. Karachi has yet to take off, which is probably why the attacks are occurring there in the first place. Second, they would dig into the Pakistan army’s own databases as well as the National Identity data. That is quite something. Second is a more serious issue.

The huge spike in the defence budget is clearly not just for the defence of Chinese nationals or for guarding the border. This needs more clarity, an impossible task given the opaque nature of Pakistan’s finances. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund needs to ask some pointed questions. Beijing has every right to demand more security, but it doesn’t really know the kind of army it is dealing with. Meanwhile, for those who think that the attacks have dented CPEC, think again. Coming on line are more projects like the Karachi Coastal Comprehensive Zone, a huge development comprising some 930 hectares, of which 630 are reclaimed. That’s just next to our borders. This is a mega project that may, in the end, be larger than even Gwadar. Besides, no one less than President Xi Jinping broke protocol to congratulate Shahbaz Sharif in March when he became Prime Minister. Officials have since been trooping into the country, indicating that Beijing still has its hand on the tiller. The bilateral boat may be tilting a good deal, but the captain is still very much on the job.

### Why India and China Are Finally Starting to Patch Things Up

17 November 2024, [TIME](#), Michael Kugelman

In June 2020, a bloody border clash broke out between India and China in the Ladakh region—the deadliest since a 1962 war. Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbors plunged to their lowest level in decades. But, after four years of icy ties, the relationship is finally beginning to thaw.

India and China struck a border deal last month that calls for resuming patrols in Ladakh, and for disengaging troops that restore positions to pre-crisis locations. The accord likely paved the way for an Oct. 23 meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping—a first since the 2020 Ladakh clash—on the sidelines of a BRICS summit in Russia. They pledged to strengthen communication and cooperation.

These developments provide a chance to inch ties forward. New Delhi has long insisted the relationship can’t improve until border tensions are eased; that precondition has now been met. The two sides can also leverage the thaw to tap more fully into existing areas of cooperation. Trade ties have remained

robust despite deep tensions, and goodwill triggered by the border deal could unlock more Chinese investment in India. New Delhi and Beijing work together in many global forums, from BRICS to the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. They share many common interests, from countering terrorism and promoting multilateralism to embracing non-Western economic models—and rejecting what they view as U.S. moral crusading around the world.

A lasting détente between the two Asian giants would have far-reaching consequences, including for Washington’s strategic partnership with New Delhi—which is fueled by the shared goal of countering Chinese power. But it could also serve as a hedge against the unpredictability of President-elect Donald Trump, should he decide to jettison his hardline approach to Beijing and seek his own rapprochement with Xi—a leader Trump has often praised, including as recently as last month.

Yet the significance of the thaw shouldn’t be overstated. That’s because India-China relations are still deeply fraught, and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future.

The Ladakh deal, for instance, does little to resolve a broader India-China border dispute. The countries share a 2,100-mi. frontier, of which 50,000 square miles are disputed—an area equal to the size of Greece. Additionally, mistrust between border troops remains high; traumatic memories of the Ladakh clash—which entailed Indian soldiers getting beaten to death with iron rods, and getting flung to their deaths into icy rivers—still strikes a nerve.

Tensions are high elsewhere, too. The mammoth Chinese Belt and Road Initiative infrastructure project, which New Delhi categorically rejects because it winds through Indian-claimed territory, remains a flashpoint. India also worries about Beijing’s naval power projection in the Indian Ocean, stretching eastward over a massive expanse from a Chinese naval base in Djibouti to what New Delhi believes are Chinese spy ships operating near the Andaman Sea, where India has island territories. Closer to home, New Delhi is concerned about the surveillance risks posed by Chinese technologies in India.

Furthermore, India and China have strong security ties with the other’s main rival. Thanks to a series of foundational defense accords, the Indian and U.S. militaries are cooperating on unprecedented levels, and ramping up arms sales and technology transfers. India has now evolved into a net security provider for the U.S., providing Washington with military equipment and helping its allies counter Chinese provocations. The U.S. has even supplied intelligence to New Delhi at critical moments. For its part, Beijing continues to pursue its longstanding security alliance with Islamabad. It provides significant military aid to

Pakistan, including equipment for ballistic missiles (which has produced a flurry of recent U.S. sanctions). Meanwhile, India and China also have profound differences on core issues. Beijing rejects many Indian policies in Kashmir, the disputed region that's provoked multiple India-Pakistan wars. India is strengthening ties with Taiwan, which Beijing views as a renegade province of China. The Dalai Lama—the exiled leader of Tibet, who Beijing regards as a dangerous separatist—has long been based in India. India and China are also each part of rival global forums: India participates in the Indo-Pacific Quad, while China leads BRI.

Yet bilateral ties should continue to improve. Continued talks on the border—which have happened regularly since the Ladakh crisis—to discuss other flashpoints, and to reassert mutual commitments to longstanding protocols that forbid the discharge of firearms, could help avert future escalations. The next opportunity for high-level dialogue could come this month, if Modi and Xi attend the G20 leaders summit in Brazil.

The best hope for deeper ties lies with their robust economic partnership (China was India's top trade partner last year). India's chief economic advisor is making the case for more Chinese FDI that could accelerate Beijing's long-term plans to invest in top Indian industries. And China, with its recent economic setbacks, stands to benefit from increasing engagement with the world's fastest-growing major economy.

The incoming return of Trump could also spur more India-China business bonhomie, if their collective fear of U.S. tariffs prompts them to carve out more commercial space for themselves.

Ultimately, relations will sometimes be cooperative, particularly on the economy, but they'll remain competitive—and possibly at times even confrontational. Still, even a modest India-China thaw is a good thing. The world is on fire, and it can't afford yet another crisis—much less a conflict.

### Why go to China?

17 November 2024, [The Kathmandu Post](#)

Prime Minister and CPN-UML Chair KP Sharma Oli is not someone who minces his words. So when Oli was asked at the recent Kantipur Conclave whether he was worried about visiting China before going to India, it was interesting to see him struggle for the right words. He eventually said something along the lines that it is hard to discern which of the two neighbours is more important and should be his first port of call. Just so that the Indians are not spooked, he added "our relations with India are deep, historical, based on culture and tradition, and predate the formation of

modern states." Ever since he became prime minister around four months ago, PM Oli has been desperately trying to get an invite from New Delhi. This was why he had sat on an earlier offer to visit China. But when he saw that New Delhi was in no mood to invite him, Oli decided to visit Beijing first. Perhaps it was also a not-so-subtle signal to India that if it is not ready to engage with him, he will not be afraid to sidle closer to China.

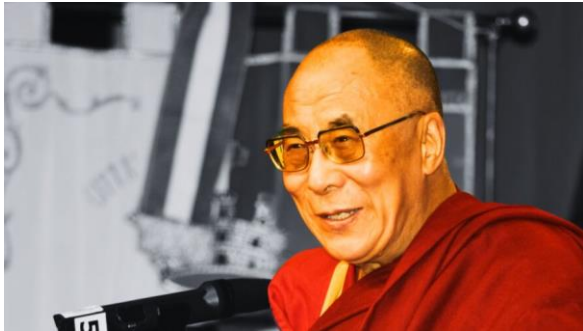
Balancing India and China would have been tricky for Prime Minister Oli irrespective of the kind of coalition he led. But as the head of a government where he is the prime minister but not the leader of the biggest party presents him with unique challenges. During his 2016 China trip following the Indian blockade, both the electorate and most political parties were strongly in favour of greater engagement with the northern neighbour. But this time, even his main coalition partner does not want him to sign any consequential agreements with China. The Nepali Congress says Nepal should not accept any loan under the Belt and Road Initiative. Rather than sign new agreements, it is in favour of asking the Chinese to follow through on their previous pledges. In other words, short of getting the Chinese to waive off the loan for the Pokhara International Airport—which, though a very long shot, could be a huge coup for the prime minister—Oli will struggle to portray his China visit as a success. If there can be no domestic political mileage for Oli, why go to China and risk losing face at home, even some UML leaders are asking?

Whether a Nepali prime minister visits New Delhi or Beijing first, it should be up to Nepal to decide. That is not a big issue. What is more of a concern is that even when our prime minister embarks on a state visit to China, domestic political calculus rather than national interest will guide his decisions. So far, neither is the Congress ready to give him more of a leeway in negotiating with the Chinese nor is the UML in a place to say that it will do no important business with China. In the latter event, the Beijing visit will be reduced to a formality even before Oli embarks on it. This is not how coalitions work. How can people trust the government with anything if its constituent parties cannot even agree on how to deal with Nepal's two most important international partners? And what does it say about the executive authority of the prime minister? The ruling coalition needs to immediately sort out its foreign policy mess before the country suffers an irreparable loss of trust abroad.



**COMMENT: The Dalai Lama's death and reincarnation will be a defining moment for Indian politics**

17 November 2024, [bne IntelliNews](#), Ben Aris



*The death of the 14th Dalai Lama will be a defining moment for Indian politics as his influence stretches to cover China's internal struggle to control Tibet and could end in a clash with India, which has offered the Buddhist leader sanctuary for six decades. / Ben Aris*

At the heart of the Tibetan plateau lies a profound challenge for India's foreign policy: the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. Already 89 years old, Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama and head of the Buddhist Yellow Hat sect, says himself that he is not long for this world and has suggested that he may be the last of his line.

The problem is that when he dies, the race will be on to find a reincarnation to replace him and that China has already said that the fifteenth Dalai Lama will be born in China, meaning he will fall under the control of the Chinese government.

There is already a precedent. When the tenth Panchen Lama, Lobsang Trinley Lhündrub Chökyi Gyaltsen, the number two in the Yellow Hat Sect hierarchy, passed away on 28 January 1989 at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Tibet, his reincarnation, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, was found a few months later in Lhari County, Nagchu Prefecture in Tibet and recognised by the Dalai Lama as the true Panchen Lama that May. But he and his family were immediately taken into custody by the Chinese authorities and have not been seen in public since. The Chinese government has said that he is living "a normal life" and "does not wish to be disturbed," but these claims have not been independently verified. As of now, his exact whereabouts and well-being remain unknown, and he has not taken up his role of leading the Yellow Hat sect in Tibet.

The question of succession for the fourteenth Dalai Lama remains vexed. The Dalai Lama, who currently lives in exile in northern India, has said that he may be reincarnated outside Tibet or may not be reincarnated at all. For the Chinese authorities that annexed Tibet in 1959, the current Dalai Lama is a thorn in the side of Beijing as it strives to incorporate Tibet and bring the region, which accounts for a third of all the

People's Republic's land, under its full control. Bringing the fifteenth Dalai Lama under China's direct control is a top priority for Beijing. Who will be the new Dalai Lama and where he lives is no longer a purely spiritual issue but a pivotal geopolitical matter involving India, China and the wider global order.

**Life in exile**

The Chinese invaded Tibet in 1959, which was still a closed country at the time and fiercely independent, and quickly took over. The Dalai Lama fled, walking across the Tibetan mountains into India, and set up a government in exile based in Dharamshala, a town in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, where it remains to this day. The Dalai Lama remains one of the most revered religious leaders in the world and has constantly lobbied for a return of Tibet's independence. Amongst his many accolades is a Nobel Peace prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet and his advocacy of a peaceful resolution to the Tibetan issue through dialogue.

China insists that the next Dalai Lama must be born within its borders and approved by Beijing, a move Tibetans see as interference in their religious traditions. Observers worry that this scenario could end with two rival and competing Dalai Lamas – one endorsed by Beijing and another by the Tibetan exile community – thereby complicating international diplomacy.

"The reincarnation debate is central to China's internal stability and its global image," Vijay Gokhale of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said in a recent paper. "It is not merely about Tibet but reflects Beijing's concerns over ethno-religious unrest and external interference in its borderlands."

India has been a strong supporter of the Tibetan government in exile, providing a home for refugees that still walk over the mountains to escape a repressive regime in Tibet. During a trip through Tibet in 1989, this correspondent was told of forced sterilisation of Tibetan women by the Chinese government in interviews with locals in Lhasa and also witnessed first-hand the summary execution of a Tibetan man who attacked a Chinese official with a knife in Shigatse, the second largest city in Tibet and the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, earlier the same day.

The reincarnation of Tibet's spiritual leader is not just a theological matter but will be a defining issue for India's relations with China and its role in the global order. Relations between the two countries have been poor due to a long-standing border dispute. Tensions between the two flared up most recently in 2023 when China issued a new "standard map" that included part of India's northern territory that was marked as part of China. In a hilarious retort, India's official cartographers issued their own new map that included all of China, but labelled "India 3.0."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains worried about Chinese aggression and on the agenda during his trip to Moscow this summer to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin was securing the delivery of Russia's advanced S-400 missile system that he wants to use to secure his borders with both China and Pakistan, which is also in dispute with New Delhi.

However, more recently the two long-standing rivals have tried to bury the hatchet as part of the attempts to build up the BRICS+ group in the face of US aggression and the growing geopolitical tensions. India's Ministry of External Affairs confirmed an agreement with China on disengagement and border patrols along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in October ahead of the latest BRICS summit, hosted by Russia in Kazan.

Gokhale argues that the question of the Dalai Lama's successor is also intricately tied to India's domestic politics, its foreign policy and the evolving geopolitical landscape shaped by the escalating Sino-US rivalry.

"The Dalai Lama remains a potent symbol of Tibetan identity and resilience. His death could trigger a geopolitical clash between India and China over the recognition of his successor," said Gokhale.

If Beijing selects and endorses its own new Dalai Lama within its borders, and dismisses a Tibetan or Indian-born rival that is recognised by the Tibetan government in exile, New Delhi's knee-jerk reaction will be to back the government in exile's candidate that will put it in direct conflict with Beijing and result in the start of a long-term legitimacy battle.

"The reincarnation issue is central to China's internal stability and international ambitions," Gokhale explains. "For Beijing, controlling the narrative is as important as controlling the territory. This is about demonstrating to the world –and to its own people – that Tibet is firmly integrated into the Chinese state."

#### **India's geopolitical conundrum**

India is heavily invested in the Tibetan question. For over six decades India has been the spiritual and political haven for the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile, a policy that has defined New Delhi's moral stance on the Tibet issue but strained its relations with China.

"India faces a tough choice," Gokhale observes. "Should it continue to serve as a sanctuary for Tibetan religious and cultural life, or should it tread cautiously to avoid provoking China further?" The presence of a large Tibetan exile community in India – numbering approximately 100,000 – and its historical commitment to supporting Tibetan autonomy have made India a key stakeholder in the reincarnation debate. The international respect the Dalai Lama commands makes it even harder for New Delhi to compromise on the Tibetan issues, as that would also hurt Modi's growing international stature and India's reputation as it starts to play a larger role on the

international stage. In particular, Modi positioned India as an alternative leader of the Global South during the G20 summit last year with great success and hopes to moderate Beijing and Moscow's more aggressive stance in their clash with the West – a message that is well received by many in the aspiring Global South countries that don't want to get drawn into a Russian-led East-West head-on clash.

Complicating matters is the fact that Tibetan Buddhism has deep roots in India, particularly in the Himalayan belt, where Tibetan spiritual traditions are interwoven with local culture. Buddha was born in Lumbini as a prince of the local royal family, which is located in modern-day Nepal and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. However, he travelled widely and attained enlightenment under the Bodhi Tree in Bodhi Gaya, which is in the present-day northern Indian state of Bihar. The site is marked by the Mahabodhi Temple, another UNESCO World Heritage Site, and is considered one of the most sacred places in Buddhism.

According to the 2011 Census of India, Buddhism is practised by approximately 8.4mn individuals, constituting about 0.7% of the nation's total population. The majority (77%) of Indian Buddhists are concentrated in the state of Maharashtra. Estimates of the proportion of Buddhists within China's population vary significantly due to differing methodologies and definitions of religious affiliation. According to a 2018 survey by the Chinese General Social Survey, approximately 4% of Chinese adults, equating to about 42mn people, formally identify as Buddhist. However, another survey in 2023 study suggests that a third (33.4%) of China's 1.4bn residents, or approximately 470mn individuals, can be identified as Buddhists.

Any perceived concessions to China on this issue could have political repercussions within India, alienating communities that revere the Dalai Lama as a spiritual guide. Due to the high number of Chinese that at least loosely associate themselves with Buddhism, it is a key domestic issue for Beijing as well.

#### **The Sino-US angle**

India's challenges are compounded by the broader geopolitical backdrop of escalating Sino-US tensions. The US has been increasingly vocal in its support for Tibetan autonomy, enacting legislation that directly challenges China's claims over the reincarnation process. The 2020 Tibetan Policy and Support Act, for instance, explicitly upholds the Tibetan community's right to select its religious leaders without interference and is another plank in the US campaign to challenge China's rise. The 2024 Resolve Tibet Act further sharpens this stance by rejecting China's historical claims over Tibet and urging direct dialogue between Beijing and the Dalai Lama – a law that has only increased Beijing's desire to take control of the Dalai Lama's successor.

“Beijing sees the reincarnation debate not just as a domestic issue but as a proxy battleground for its competition with the United States,” Gokhale notes. Beijing not only wants to secure control over the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation for reasons of control over Tibet, but also as it fears the issue will become a proxy for its escalating rivalries with Washington.

Gokhale warns that India cannot afford to approach the reincarnation question with indifference or delay. A clear and balanced policy is crucial to navigating the complex dynamics at play. “India has managed the Dalai Lama’s presence with relative success over the past six decades,” he says. “But the post-Dalai Lama era will demand a new level of strategic foresight and diplomatic agility.”

Among the key policy questions India must address are:

**Recognition and Legitimacy:** If an alternative Dalai Lama is identified in exile or within Indian territory, how should India respond? Should it extend recognition and allow the successor to reside in India, or maintain ambiguity to avoid antagonising China?

**Advocacy for Dialogue:** Should India publicly support calls for negotiations between Beijing and Tibetan representatives? Such a stance could align India with international expectations while signalling its principled stand on the Tibetan issue.

**Engagement with the Exile Community:** How should India manage the Tibetan government-in-exile and the broader exile community during the transition? Gokhale suggests continuing to permit their cultural and educational activities while firmly deterring any violent or provocative actions.

**Managing a Domestic Backlash:** Tibetan Buddhism has a significant following in India, particularly in the northern states. Controversy over the next Dalai Lama could spark unrest among these communities, necessitating proactive measures to address their concerns.

**Handling the Interregnum:** The period between the death of the fourteenth Dalai Lama and the identification of his successor could be fraught with uncertainty. India must prepare for potential disputes within the Tibetan exile community and respond to Chinese demands regarding the Dalai Lama’s symbols, such as ritual objects that are used to determine the authenticity of a new Dalai Lama.

#### **Walking the tightrope**

While Gokhale acknowledges that India’s actions may not fundamentally alter China’s policy on the Dalai Lama, he argues that inaction is not an option. Beijing’s approach to Tibet has always been driven by its domestic imperatives of maintaining political control and stability in the region. However, India’s role as the host of the Dalai Lama and the epicentre of Tibetan religious activity makes it an indispensable actor in the reincarnation debate.

“India should not entertain any illusions that appeasing China on this issue will lead to better bilateral relations,” Gokhale cautions. “If anything, it may embolden Beijing to escalate its demands, including shutting down Tibetan institutions in India.” Instead, India must strike a balance between its strategic interests and its long-standing commitments to Tibetan autonomy. Gokhale suggests that India consider coordinating with like-minded nations, such as the US and European countries, to counter China’s attempts to monopolise the reincarnation process.

The succession of the Dalai Lama is not just a matter of religious tradition, but it will be a defining moment for the Indo-China relationship. For China, it is a test of its ability to assert control over Tibet in the face of international scrutiny. For India, it is an opportunity to reaffirm its democratic values and strategic independence while managing the risks of confrontation with its most powerful neighbour.

Gokhale concludes: “The reincarnation question embodies the intersection of spirituality, geopolitics and power. How India navigates this challenge will shape its future role as a regional leader and a global influencer.”

#### **Analysis: Under Trump, Pakistan to be viewed through ‘China, India lens’: experts**

16 November 2024, [DAWN](#), Anwar Iqbal

Experts say many picks are decidedly anti-China, while nominees such as Rubio, Waltz have demonstrated their pro-India leanings in past.

As President-elect Donald Trump picks people to staff his second administration, Washington-based scholars of US-South Asia relations are weighing the potential impact of these appointments on ties with Pakistan.

These observers predict that the Trump administration’s foreign policy focus will likely prioritise countering China’s influence in South Asia, a shift that could present challenges for Pakistan as the geopolitical landscape evolves.

Historically, Islamabad has sought to be treated independently by Washington, rather than viewed through the lens of India or Afghanistan.

However, with the incoming administration, the focus will shift once again — this time to China. This shift does not guarantee that Pakistan will be treated independently; instead, the US may continue to approach it through the lens of its competition with Beijing.

In interviews with *Dawn*, several scholars noted that the new team includes individuals who advocate for a stronger alliance with India, which could pose potential challenges for Pakistan.

They suggest that Trump’s choices, which includes figures like Senator Marco Rubio and Congressman

Mike Waltz, signal a clear shift toward strengthening the US-India alliance, likely at the expense of Pakistan. Joshua White, a former senior advisor to the White House on South Asian Affairs, warns that the nominees' past experiences and concerns about China will likely influence their stance on Pakistan too.

"Trump's senior appointees will likely be quite skeptical — if not hostile — toward deepening US-Pakistan ties, given their experiences in Afghanistan, their valuation of the US-India relationship, and their concerns over Pakistan's relationship with China," he said.

Rubio, a strong advocate for countering China, recently introduced legislation aimed at elevating India's status to that of a key US ally, reflecting the growing strategic defence and technology cooperation between the two nations. Rubio's long-standing stance on South Asia, including efforts to limit US assistance to Pakistan over its support for Kashmiris' struggle for freedom, further emphasises the policy direction.

Shuja Nawaz, a distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council's South Asia Centre, stresses that Pakistan's role in US strategy remains largely confined to counter-terrorism, particularly in Afghanistan. "Pakistan's utility to the US is primarily in counter-terrorism. It's unlikely to rank high in terms of positive engagement," Nawaz said.

The anticipated nomination of Mike Waltz as national security adviser is expected to further tilt the balance toward US-India defence cooperation. Waltz, a strong proponent of military collaboration with India, is also the co-chair of the Indian Caucus in Congress. He is expected to push for deepening the US-India partnership, especially as both countries desire to counter growing security challenges from China.

Hassan Abbas of the National Defence University in Washington, notes that while it is still early to fully assess the direction of Trump's foreign policy, America's national interests will ultimately drive decisions.

He acknowledges the growing influence of Pakistani diaspora activists in the US, but advises Islamabad to broaden its engagement with Washington beyond security issues as US-India relations continue to deepen.

Uzair Younus of The Asia Group agrees that Trump's appointees, particularly Rubio and Waltz, are likely to maintain a hardline stance toward Pakistan. Younus also points to Rubio's history of criticizing leaders who leverage anti-American sentiment for domestic political gain, a stance that could hurt PTI's efforts to solicit Trump's support to get Imran Khan released. Furthermore, Trump's domestic reforms, such as those led by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), are expected to facilitate economic cooperation between the US and India, easing the

path for Indian businesses. The inclusion of Kash Patel, an Indian-American attorney, in Trump's administration is being seen as an indication.

"There may be factions in the Trump administration that would like to see the US pressure Pakistan on various domestic and foreign policy issues—from the status of Imran Khan to Kashmir. But that would require sustained attention from Washington, and I think it is more likely that the administration is preoccupied with Iran, China, border challenges with Mexico, and a host of other priorities," Joshua White said.

Meanwhile, Shuja Nawaz warned that Pakistan may not be high on the list of positive priorities of the Trump administration.

Waltz served in Afghanistan and will likely carry the memories of having lost comrades in the eastern region where the Haqqani Network operated, he said. "He also might further subscribe to the Biden administration view that Pakistan is now in the Chinese lap," Nawaz said, adding: "Pakistan will need to show that it can improve its economy to garner US support via the International Financial Institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and ADB."

### **Lhasa: Black and White'**

15 November 2024, [Ekantipur](#), K. Raj

After the monsoon of 1996, there was a chance to go to Lhasa with 20/22 tourists from Poland. Through a tour company in the city of Poznan, Poland, I was responsible for taking tourists to Kathmandu, Chitwan National Park in Nepal, rafting on Trishuli River and Lhasa in Tibet.

The Chinese Embassy in Kathmandu used to facilitate the issuance of permits for visiting Tibet. After the official tour company submitted the details of the tourists to the embassy, they had to get 'clearance' from the center and only then the permit was issued from Kathmandu.

About seven years after the government of reformist Chinese Communist leader Deng Xiaoping brutally crushed student protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, I was on my way to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, which China had occupied in the 1950s.

Before the Chinese army captured Lhasa, on the night of March 17, 1959, the religious and political leader of Tibet, the Dalai Lama Khampa, reached Arunachal Pradesh, India, and took refuge with the Tibetans. Before leaving Lhasa, the Dalai Lama and his aides, informed of the complicated situation, appealed to the influential countries of the West for help, but no one would listen. The Dalai Lama, who is referred to as 'His Holiness', is still living in Dharamsala, India.

Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai promoted tourism as an important part of international relations and diplomacy during his tenure. Visits to China at that time were either official or production and industry study tours. China International Travel Services (CITS) was established at the government level in 1954 to organize such tours. After the

, the company became one of the largest travel companies in China. Deng Xiaoping, who emerged after the death of Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse Tung, made tourism a means of earning foreign exchange and economic development after 1978. At a time when Chinese citizens rarely had contact with the outside world, Tibet became a subject of mystery and curiosity to everyone.

Even now Nepal has only foreign mission in Lhasa, no other country has. Also, Lhasa's international air connectivity is only with Kathmandu.

I was going to Lhasa at a young age with tourists from Poland, a country in Eastern Europe that had just woken up from the bad dream of communism, to Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, the autonomous region of China, which is achieving rapid economic growth through the path of democracy. Serving a group of tourists would earn good money.

Although a tour operator named Orwis started tourism in Poland in 1923, tourism business was nationalized like other economic sectors after the Second World War. After the countries of Eastern Europe were freed from the dark shadow of communism in 1989, Poles also began to travel abroad as tourists.

A small plane of China Southwest Airlines took off from Kathmandu to Lhasa around 10 am. It was my first experience flying internationally on a large ship. Aang would shriek as the ship's wheels left the ground and flew into the sky as the ship descended toward the house. Due to the start of rain, the sky was cloudy. I was desperately trying to look down from the window at twenty thousand feet.

After some time, the ship reached the top of Everest and after the pilot announced that 'the black pyramid-like takura on the lower left is Mount Everest', all the passengers got up from their seats and started taking pictures. Looking down, we saw clouds floating here and there, countless snow-covered peaks, glaciers and even Mount Everest.

I didn't have a camera, so I took a picture of Everest with my eye lens and kept it in mind. That exciting flight over the highest point on earth located in the majestic Mahalangur Himal was unforgettable not only for me but for almost all the passengers.

For a while, nothing was visible from the ship except the seemingly endless expanse of snow. The ship was flying over a high plateau known as the roof of the world, munching on snow-covered land, lakes of Kanchan blue water. Flying over the greenery of Nepal

and Ankantar and Chisa Pahara, the ship has entered Tibet, an autonomous region of China. My eyes were fixed on the window and without even breathing I was measuring the land of vast Tibet stretching beyond the horizon.

I had no leading role in Lhasa nor did I have contact with anyone. Those Polish tourists probably knew more about Tibet than I did. They had come to visit after having studied a little about Tibet.

Maybe because the citizens of a country that has recently been freed from the clutches of dictatorship have a different mindset, they thought that it was right that I visited Lhasa with their money, it was beyond imagination that I would spend my own money to visit Tibet. Because almost 480 USD was spent on air tickets alone. I felt that there was a difference in their thinking and behavior from tourists from Western countries.

After about an hour of flight, we landed at Gangor Airport in Tibet. Since the time in Lhasa is 2 hours and 15 minutes later than that of Nepal, it was around 1:30 when we reached there. The airport is normal. Although there are domestic flights from Chinese cities including Chengdu to Lhasa, international air connections are only from Kathmandu.

At the airport at an altitude of 3600 meters, flights will not be allowed after 2 pm because of wind. The Polish tourists and I lined up for the immigration check. A Tibetan tour guide came with a small minibus to pick us up. He also spoke Hindi, and had spent some time in Dharamsala, India. After we boarded the bus, the guide said in English Started the

'briefing'. Lhasa city is 90 kilometers away from the airport and it takes about one and a half hours. There were only scattered houses around the road.

Around five o'clock we reached the hotel in Lhasa city. It was late evening. After 'checking in' at the hotel and sending all the tourists to their rooms, I also went to my room. Lek Lagech Kare, felt nauseous and a bit heavy headed. So I went to bed without eating dinner. There was a noise coming from other rooms too.

It must have been 4 o'clock in the morning in Nepal, Beira from the hotel came with tea. After getting the information that breakfast is ready and the guide has also arrived, I got ready and left. Another guide has come today, called Chiring. He also speaks Hindi and English well and spent five years as a disciple of the Dalai Lama in Dharamshala, India. A little bit of Nepali is also spoken. Telling that he came back to India from Nepal as a Tibetan refugee, he said, 'It is difficult for us to cross the border of Nepal.' At that time, all Toyotas in Pokhara were only 1975 model Korala Deluxe and Hydellux. Only a few wealthy people in Kathmandu owned Volkswagen Beetle models.

Since I was hungry, I entered a small roadside restaurant and ordered noodles. The noodles came with chunks of beef patty and chopsticks. I said not to eat beef. And the restaurateur brought vegetarian



noodles. But they started teaching me because I didn't know how to use chopsticks. He brought a banana seed and taught me in Hindi, "Aisei Pagte Hain".

After dusk, the shutters of a small building opened, and Tibetan girls in miniskirts began to appear. Colored lights started to flash. A man came in the car and started talking to the girl. Maybe a dance bar or something, I found the scene interesting. Since I was single, I wanted to go, but I didn't dare because I was sick.

After resting the next day, I went to see Jokhang Temple and Sera Monastery in Lhasa along with the tourists. The history of Nepal is also connected with the Jokhang Temple built in the seventh century. Inside the temple, the 2500-year-old Buddha statue that Bhrikuti took from Nepal after her marriage to the Tibetan emperor Srongchan Gampo is kept facing Nepal. It is said that Newari Kaligars were taken from Nepal to build the said temple.

When we reached there in the morning, the pilgrims were crawling on the ground and praying towards the temple. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution of 1966, the Chinese Red Guards destroyed many structures including important statues and artefacts in this temple. Repairs started after 1972 and it was restored in 1980. Near the Jokhang temple there is also a house with a small hoarding belonging to a large business group of Nepal. I wanted to take a closer look but the guide didn't have time.

Infrastructure construction work is going on in Lhasa city. Everywhere there were bulldozers and excavators and Chinese workers in yellow helmets. Braving the dust and traffic jams, we reached Sera Gumba, 5 km away. Founded in the early 15th century, this monastery is located at the foot of a hill. Before the 1959 incident, there was a huge monastery here that could accommodate up to 6,000 Buddhist monks. Inside the monastery, the large halls contained large thangka paintings relating to the life of the Buddha.

After visiting the monastery, the guide explained to the tourists about Lord Buddha and the paintings containing his biography. After calming the curiosity of the tourists, he asked everyone, 'What is religion?' The tourists took turns answering. Some say religion is 'good work', some say 'religion is faith', some say 'helping the poor is religion'.

Although the tourists were from former communist countries, they all believed in Christianity. I said 'Accepting the existence of God is religion'. The guide began to say seriously, 'You are right, but in the language that common people understand, religion is the only thing that goes with a person even after death. After we die, everything should be left here, but even after death, people can take religion with them. All the tourists were impressed by the guide's words and the huge hall resounded with applause. On the way back to

, one Marek (the police call Marek in English) said to me, 'Raj, you know, when some people here die, they cut up the dead bodies over there and feed them to the vultures.' Didn't know. I said 'myth'. But as Marek said, that is reality. Later I heard that cremation is done in the same way in Upper Mustang of Nepal. It is called 'Sky Burial' in English.

The next day we went to see the palaces of the Dalai Lama, Potala and Norbuling. The Potala Palace was heavily guarded by the Chinese military and photography was strictly prohibited. Foreign tourists, Tibetans and Chinese tourists flocked to see the huge palace covered with white limestone on the red hill.

According to our guide, the Buddha and other lama statues and small stupas inside the palace are made of gold. In that way, there should be tons of gold inside the Potala. Perhaps that's why the proverb "Lhasa has a ear is my daughter's ears" has come into vogue. Not only in Nepal but also the Greek philosopher Herodotus, who is known as the father of history, has described the gold found in Tibet in an interesting manner. legend According to

, Padmasambhava, the pioneer of Tantric Buddhism, scattered gold from his siddhi in the land of Tibet. But Tibetans do not think it is good to dig the ground to extract gold because Padmasambhava gets angry when they dig the ground to extract gold, the fertility of the soil is destroyed, storms come and the crops are damaged.

Potala Palace is the Dalai Lama's winter palace and Norbuling's summer palace. Norbuling's palace was built a little further away, and all over the courtyard were beautiful flowers, including dahlias. In the palace, a golden throne about 4 meters high, donated by a merchant from Lhasa in honor of the Dalai Lama, and a box-like and box-like radio, gifted by the then Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, are also interesting items.

There is a consulate general of Nepal. That delegation of Nepal has stood as a witness with the history of political and commercial relations between Nepal and Tibet (voted at that time). The agency opened in Lhasa in 1856 as the "Lawyer's Office" and was transformed into the Consulate General in 1956.

Initially, food and other materials were exported from Nepal to Tibet, while sheep wool, wool, gold, salt, and herbs were imported from Tibet. It is said that travel and trade to the north of Nepal was safer than to the south.

After traveling to Tibet for five days and four nights, we returned to Kathmandu by Air China plane. Perhaps there was a psychological effect, in Lhasa my lungs always felt like they were starved of oxygen. After Tribhuvan International Airport Burn, Phyllis tourists moved to New Delhi in transit. I was more than I got out of the airport long after leaving a long time.

## A Modest Call for China to Elevate Kailash's Status

15 November 2024, [Republica](#), Dr Ganesh Regmi

China is Nepal's inseparable and close ally. Nepal should maintain a special relationship with such a large and prosperous neighboring country. Just as the Nepali people along the southern border share a people-to-people connection with India, the residents along the northern border share a bond with China.

Nepal has ancient and historical ties with China. There are various religious, social, and spiritual connections, including the revered Manasarovar and Kailash. Manasarovar and Kailash are unique and unparalleled in their importance. Kailash is the home of Mahadev, the supreme deity in Hinduism. For Buddhists, Jains, Shaivites, and yogis, Kailash is what Mecca and Medina are for Muslims. However, it appears that the Chinese government has not paid much attention to maintaining the dignity of Kailash, which is circled by Tibetan locals who prostrate themselves on the ground, taking three steps forward, bowing, and continuing like this for nearly a month.

I am writing this article based on my firsthand experiences during a pilgrimage to Manasarovar and Kailash, which is quite expensive for the average Nepali. I am not an influential person, nor am I in a position to advise the Chinese government; however, as a responsible pilgrim, I humbly request the Chinese government to consider the following points to elevate the status of Manasarovar and Kailash.

First, do not be stingy in providing necessary information. As a communist country, and due to the presence of the Dalai Lama, China has its internal policies to control information in Tibet. However, it is essential to provide necessary information to pilgrims visiting the sacred land of Manasarovar and Kailash.

The region is vast and extremely remote. Information such as the route to take, the locations of places, distances, altitudes, accommodations, dining facilities, emergency rescue arrangements, safety measures, and reporting of crimes like theft or fraud should be made available, preferably in English. Without sufficient information, the journey feels like traveling in the dark.

Second, manage the entry gate to Manasarovar and control the unfair 'vehicle syndicate'. The journey to Manasarovar is long and challenging. While the routes look attractive and well-maintained, the main entry gate to Manasarovar has issues with vehicles getting stuck in mud and sand. There is no shelter in case of rain, nor places to have tea, snacks, or rest.

A bigger issue is that vehicles are not allowed entry into Manasarovar for the pilgrimage. Whether a pilgrim can take their vehicle inside depends on the whims of the gatekeepers, and bribes are reportedly needed. Such a 'local syndicate' was common in

Nepal's Mustang area two decades ago, and now it is seen at Manasarovar.

Third, improve the condition of the Manasarovar circumambulation route. While Kailash is circled on foot, the tradition for Manasarovar involves circumambulation by vehicles, which takes around three hours. Unfortunately, the route is a dusty, rough, and uncomfortable dirt road, resembling Nepal's remote and undeveloped areas. It is disappointing to see the world's second-most prosperous nation leaving such an important pilgrimage route in poor condition. One wonders why China, a symbol of prosperity, has not upgraded this road to the standards of America, Europe, or Singapore.

Fourth, construct holy bathing ghats at Manasarovar. There are no designated holy bathing areas around Manasarovar. Due to the absence of proper facilities, pilgrims have to bathe in muddy spots near the shore, such as in the west-north area near the guest house. The mud is so thick that shoes get stuck, and bathing in the freezing water leaves one's legs covered in mud. Facilities for warm and cold water would make bathing more accessible, and creating proper bathing ghats would be a minor challenge for prosperous China.

Fifth, address the lack of proper toilet facilities. The public toilets in Manasarovar are in an appalling state. They are communal, foul-smelling, have no proper doors or locks, and lack water. The sight is disheartening, and it would be unfortunate for even an enemy to experience such conditions. Unable to use the toilets, I, like many others, had to resort to open areas at night.

Sixth, build a temple or Shiva Lingam at Manasarovar. There are no temples or Shiva Lingams at Manasarovar and Kailash. This means that offerings and prayers brought from Nepal or other countries have no place to be dedicated and are instead scattered on the ground. Despite a long and spiritually significant journey, there is no designated place to express religious sentiments or bow before the divine.

Seventh, pay attention to pilgrims' health and safety. Manasarovar and the Kailash pilgrimage require traversing harsh terrain at high altitudes, with strong winds and extreme cold. Although tens of thousands of pilgrims visit Manasarovar and Kailash every year, there are no health camps or emergency medical facilities, not even private clinics or pharmacies. It seems that pilgrims' lives have been left to the care of Lord Shiva himself, as two of my fellow travelers lost their lives during the journey.

Eighth, ensure the pilgrims' welfare, safety, and rescue. There is no proper infrastructure for the well-being and safety of pilgrims. There are no safe shelters along the way, no facilities to warm up or drink hot water, no oxygen camps in case of altitude sickness, and no government medical staff or equipment in

sight. This suggests that China has not prioritized the dignity of Kailash.

Ninth, remove the restriction on helicopter access. Helicopters are the most efficient means of rescue in high-altitude areas, yet they are not allowed in the Kailash region. This restriction deserves reconsideration, as the Chinese helicopters used for security should not be considered a threat.

Tenth, security should be further strengthened along the route. CCTV cameras could be installed in necessary areas. The pilgrimage is often exploited by brokers, with pilgrims overcharged for services like horses, where the local owners receive only a fraction of the payment. Fixed rates in English would prevent such issues. Local police and immigration officers are often harsh towards pilgrims, and better facilities are needed.

Lastly, a nation itself may not follow a particular religion, and China may consider religion as "the opium." However, for the people, religion is important. It is the responsibility of a great and prosperous country like China to maintain the dignity of Kailash, a place revered by many Tibetans and others alike, who circle it with utmost reverence.

While the revenue from pilgrim royalties might be very little to a wealthy nation like China, the respect for Kailash, a sacred center for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Shaivites worldwide, should not be compromised. Addressing the concerns outlined above by building infrastructure and arranging necessary management would demonstrate that China is not diminishing the sanctity of Manasarovar and Kailash, but rather upholding it. Otherwise, it might appear that the current state is left unchanged to portray the deprived status of the Tibetan people.

### Tibet-Aid Program at 30: Driving Tibet's Development in Xi's 'New Era'

15 November 2024, [The Jamestown Foundation](#), Devendra Kumar



A medical team as part of the TAP at work in Tibet. (Source: Tibet.cn)

### Executive Summary:

- The Tibet-Aid Program (TAP), a principal driver of development in Tibet, has ramped up significantly under Xi Jinping's rule.
- The TAP has, throughout its 30-year history, sought to use material development to placate local tensions that have periodically arisen from the Party's governance failings in the region. Most recently, the emphasis has been on improving the quality of healthcare and education.
- The TAP is a focus for the Party's priorities, and the increasing flow of resources to "moderately prosperous" villages on the Indian border could be a cause for concern for neighboring India.
- Tibet remains an unattractive destination for cadres despite copious propaganda suggesting otherwise, which has helped perpetuate a relatively poor standard of governance in the region.

On November 11, 2024, the *Tibet Daily* reported on a book launch event held in Lhasa to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Tibet-Aid Program, sometimes also called pairing-up assistance for Tibet (TAP; 对口援藏) (Tibet Autonomous Region [TAR] Government, November 11). The book, written by a cadre sent to Tibet from Zhejiang Province, eulogizes the work of his comrades and the region's beauty across 110 poems. This is the latest of a string of propaganda efforts this year that have praised the work of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) over the last three decades in bringing the region further under the control of Beijing. Beyond the book launch, websites for positive news stories around the anniversary has been set up by state media outlet Xinhua as well as the TAR government, both of which features as its top article a picture of a smiling Xi Jinping, waving in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa (Xinhua/TAP 30th Anniversary, accessed November 12; TAR Government, accessed November 12).

The Party has also sought to promote its achievements in Tibet overseas. This week, state-sanctioned Tibetan Studies experts are visiting Latvia and Estonia. In the former, they discussed "the development achievements of China's Tibet in the new era (中国西藏发展成就)," among other topics. According to the *People's Daily*, the parliamentarians were grateful for the visit, as Latvian people "mostly learn about China's Tibet from American movies and western media, and have accepted too many wrong views about it (多从美国电影和西方媒体中了解中国西藏·接受了太多有关西藏的错误观点)" (*People's*

*Daily*, November 11). The overall propaganda efforts have been accompanied by key meetings in Beijing and Lhasa involving senior CCP officials, which have emphasized the TAP's centrality and the need to further ramping up the program.

#### **Wang Huning Outlines Way Forward in Lhasa**

The most important event of 2024 for the Party's approach to Tibet was the Fourth Tibet-Aid Work Conference (第四次对口支援西藏工作会议), held in Lhasa from August 27–29. [1] The conference marked the TAP's 30th anniversary, and for the first time the meeting took place in the regional capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Wang Huning (王沪宁), the fifth-ranked member of the 20th Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) and Chairperson of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) attended and delivered a speech, in which he signaled TAP's increased centrality to the governance of Tibet under Xi Jinping's leadership (TAR Government, August 29). The fact that serving and retired senior officials travelled to Lhasa for the conference and the messages conveyed underscore the growing significance of the TAP in the PRC's approach to the region.

Wang's visit sought to underline the CCP's focus on people's basic needs. He visited Lhoka People's Hospital (山南市人民医院) in Nedog district, which receives support from Anhui province, as well as the administrative seat of Southwestern prefecture-level city Lhoka (山南市) along the Indian border (Xinhua, August 29). Projects announced since the Sixth Tibet Work Forum in 2015 have focused on healthcare and education, emphasizing the Party's aim of ameliorating people's standard of living in the sparsely populated yet strategically important region.

In his speech, Wang emphasized the “spirit of driving in nails (钉钉子精神).” Translated more euphemistically in official sources as the “spirit of perseverance,” the phrase was first used by CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping at the second plenary session of the 18th CCP Central Committee in February 2013 (State Council Information Office, July 11, 2019). It refers to the necessity of repeating actions multiple times before achieving the required result. As Xi noted at the time, “When we use a hammer to drive in a nail, a single knock often may not be enough; we must keep hammering until it is well in place before proceeding to hammer the next one. If you keep on driving in nails, then you will achieve great results (钉钉子往往不是一锤子就能钉好的，而是要一锤一锤接着敲，直到把钉子钉实钉牢，钉牢一颗再钉下一颗，不断钉下去，必然大有成效)” (Party Member Net, February 28, 2013). In the context of Tibet, the phrase has been used to convey the priority of central

government directives in key policy areas such as the “two centenary goals,” stability maintenance, and border area development.

Wang's speech also echoed much of the official discourse around the 30th anniversary by referring to the “Spirit of Old Tibet (老西藏精神).” Invoked by senior CCP figures, including Xi, since the late 1990s, the phrase is intended to exhort Tibet-Aid cadres take inspiration from the Party's seizing control of Tibet in the early 1950s to ensure long-term stability, development, and prosperity (TAR CCP, June 26, 2014; Xi Theory, July 2021; People's Forum, December 21, 2021). [2]

The invocation of this spirit is a nationalist call for mobilizing cadres to serve in the frontier region, which is not a popular destination. Beyond ethnic divisions, the negative attitudes of many Tibetans toward Han officials, low economic development, and—for Tibet-Aid cadres in particular—the harsh climate make it an unappealing place to be sent. Several cadres are known to have died while serving in the TAR due to the hostile conditions. Where appeals to nationalist sentiment have not sufficed, the CCP has resorted to offering cadres better wages, subsidies, and career advancement opportunities. These are attractive, especially for young cadres from poorer central and western provinces that neighbor Tibetan areas.

#### **Early TAP Led to Uneven Development, Local Tensions**

Beijing launched the TAP in 1994 on the recommendations of the third Tibet Work Forum in July that year. This followed widespread ethnic tensions from the late 1980s onward borne out of increasing inequality along regional and ethnic lines. The original blueprint for the program drew from earlier mobilization of cadres and resources from inland (内地) provinces during the heyday of Maoist socialism and an array of programs launched after a 1980 visit to Tibet by PBSC member Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) and that year's inaugural Tibet Work Forum (China Economy Online, April 8, 2008). Later, TAP also came to supplement the “Great Western Development (西部大开发)” strategy, which was launched in 1999 to channel resources from more prosperous and developed coastal provinces to poorer western provinces (Gov.cn, October 10, 2009).

The TAP has a three-pronged assistance mechanism. These are the direct transfer of funds to the TAR government from partner provinces, centrally administered cities, central ministries, and institutions; the transfer of cadres to the TAR; and investments in specific projects in counties and prefectures in the region. Cadres from partnering provinces typically serve for one or three years in counties and prefectures where the partner province funds projects. According to the latest official

statistics, nearly 12,000 cadres across 10 batches have served from 18 provinces, 89 central organs and ministries, and 4 centrally administered cities (People's Daily Online, August 16, 2022).

Functionally, the assistance projects range from "group style (组团式)" medical and educational assistance to poverty alleviation, urbanization, and infrastructure development in so-called "xiaokang villages (小康村; moderately prosperous villages)" in counties along the border with India. "Group-style" assistance in these villages began in 2015. It is characterized as a "people-centered" policy but is also intended to change the way projects are undertaken. Under this model, dozens of doctors, nurses, and teachers come to select hospitals to train local doctors and teachers and to change how hospitals and schools function at the holistic level (Xinhua, August 23, 2022). The TAR provincial government has undertaken a massive project of developing more than 628 xiaokang villages in border counties along its border with India since 2017; and TAP has played a significant role in funding infrastructure, tourism, educational and health facilities there (Toutiao, July 7, 2023; Tibet.cn, August 26).

In the late 2010s, it became clear that the benefits of the TAP were not being distributed optimally. The structure of subsidies led to a form of "boomerang aid" that helped only a fraction of Tibetan elites and non-Tibetan migrants in urban areas. [3] Tensions flared in 2008, with massive protests in Tibetan areas. This provided the impetus for change. The Fifth Tibet Work Forum in 2010 called for intensifying the TAP as part of developing a "long-term strategy (长久之策)." It was decided that developed provinces, centrally administered cities, and central organs must set aside 1 percent of their fiscal revenue annually to the Tibet-Aid program, as well as emphasizing coordinated development (TAR CCP, 26 June 2014; *Qiushi*, August 27). This shift has become more pronounced under Xi Jinping, though it is unclear whether the sources of tension from 2008 will be resolved under this new path.

### 'New Era' TAP Focuses on Education, Healthcare, and Unity

Wang Huning's August conference speech underscored the need to persist in policies across four domains: maintaining stability, increasing development, promoting ecological civilization, and strengthening border areas (People's Daily Online, August 28). In Xi Jinping's "new era," the TAP is the primary vehicle through which these four objectives are to be achieved in the TAR. One of the earliest formulations of Xi's Tibet policy came at the Sixth Tibet Work Forum in 2015. Xi articulated his priorities for

governing the region as "six musts (六个必须)," which align with the approach taken by the TAP. Other priorities included strengthening the CCP's organizational and ideological hegemony, expanding and strengthening local party organizations, and "rallying the peoples' hearts (凝聚人心)" to promote ethnic unity (Xinhua, August 26, 2015).

Wang's also made repeated references to Xi Jinping's earlier emphasis on creating a "new situation for Tibet Aid work (援藏工作新局面)," something that was picked up by official media commentaries (*People's Daily*, August 29, 2020; CPC News, August 30). In practice, "new situation" refers to the focus on rural revitalization, health, and education work, as well as the TAP as the key vehicle for achieving the party-state's political goals of fostering ethnic unity and ensuring Tibetans' support. It also reflects changes to the structure of the program itself. For example, group-style education and health projects aim to bring about sustainable improvements to health and educational institutions in the TAR, as opposed to sending talents to temporarily make up for the region's shortage of skilled doctors and teachers (Xinhua, August 6, 2022). Xi's personal interest in ramping up the TAP is often conveyed through media reports on his involvement in the TAP projects from the days when he worked in Fujian province in the late 1990s (CCTV, September 8, 2015; October 6, 2017; *People's Daily*, July 28, 2022).

Media commentaries also referred to the capacity of TAP projects to "transform people's lives and win their hearts (改善民生凝聚人心)." Xi first articulated this phrase at the Sixth Tibet Work Forum, and refers to ensuring regime stability and loyalty through improving people's general quality of life (*China Daily*, September 8, 2015; Xinhua, August 28).

The increase in cadres serving under the TAP has been dramatic during Xi's tenure. Around 7,000 out of the total 12,000 have served since 2012, and the size of each batch has also risen substantially, from 622 in 1993 to 2,117 in the batch that has been serving since 2021 (Xinhua, August 22). A notable driver of TAP's expansion came in 2015, when the Central Organization Department—which oversees all personnel matters for the TAP—mobilized the ministries of education and health, as well as the partnering provinces, for "group-style Tibet Aid work (组团式援藏工作)" focusing on education and health. Since then, the number of projects launched and cadres dispatched under these two sectors have contributed significantly to the visibility and centrality of the program in the CCP's Tibet policy (Xinhua, August 23).

The expansion of the program to include cultural and educational domains also follows the Party's gradual shift to "Second-Generation Ethnic Policies (第二代民



族政策)” in the last two decades. These refer to efforts by the central government to dilute the ethnic autonomy provisions and rights guaranteed to ethnic groups including Tibetans under the *Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law* (中华人民共和国民族区域自治法) (Gov.cn, July 29, 2005; CECC, February 2006; Made in China Journal, September 7, 2020). For example, the Party has introduced a range of policies from increasing mandarin Chinese-language instruction in schools to appointing more Han cadres in contravention to the *Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law* (Center of Excellence for Himalayan Studies, September 13, 2023). Educational and legal campaigns also seek to instill trust in PRC laws and regulations over Tibetan Buddhist religious norms and beliefs (TAR Government, February 5). A common thread to the second-generation ethnic policies is “forging a sense of Chinese nation through national, legal, and civil consciousness (铸牢中华民族共同体意识和国家意识公民意识法治意识),” which has become “the key line of ethnic work of the CCP (新时代党的民族工作的主线)” aimed at creating a “unified (统一)” national identity (*Qiushi*, August 8).

### Conclusion

Wang Huning’s presence at this year’s Tibet-Aid Work Conference is the latest of several senior officials’ visits to the TAR in recent times. This could indicate that the Party senses a degree of fragility in its hold over the hearts and minds of ethnic communities. In July, one month prior to the Conference, Wang also visited Tibetan areas in Sichuan in addition to spending time in the TAR (*Xinhua*, July 7; July 28).

The TAP’s focus on education and healthcare reflects a conscious effort to redress failings in earlier policies by seeking to improve the material benefits that accrue to local Tibetans who have so far been excluded from economic benefits. However, the Party-state’s belief that economic development will create a supplicant and peaceful Tibet could be misguided. By ignoring Tibetans’ cultural and spiritual desires, insisting that they conform to a unified ethno-national identity, and diluting laws and regulations that enshrine their autonomy, Beijing risks following a self-defeating strategy.

### At Tiananmen Square, tight security with metal detectors reflects a changing China

15 November 2024, [NPR](#), John Ruwitch



*People's Liberation Army soldiers stand guard in Tiananmen Square at the end of the flag-raising ceremony marking the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, in Beijing, on Oct. 1. Andrea Verdelli/Bloomberg via Getty Images*

It was my second attempt in as many days to visit Tiananmen Square, and it wasn't looking good. When I tried the day before, a guard said I required an online appointment — and, no, I couldn't make a same-day booking. So, I scanned a QR code, entered my name and passport number, and returned the following day.

Now, I was at the front of a line of dozens of people trying to get onto the world's biggest public square. Just making it here was a process: There was a police ID check to exit the nearby subway station. Another to get in line on the sidewalk. A third while standing in line. And now, there was a fourth — by a towering police officer standing before a bank of metal detectors and X-ray machines — the final inspection. My journalist visa caught his eye. He told me to step aside, and radioed his boss.

Another cop arrived. Foreign reporters, he said apologetically, need special permission. And I did not have it.

Seventy-five years ago last month, Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong declared the founding of the People's Republic from atop Tiananmen, the Gate of Heavenly Peace. Situated on the southern edge of the imperial Forbidden City, few symbols of power in China rival it.

The vast square that unfolds at its feet is another symbol of power, which over the decades has vacillated between people — and the state.

A protest tradition took root in Tiananmen Square more than 100 years ago when students marched through the square in 1919 — the May Fourth Movement. They were protesting the terms of the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I.

After the Communist Party took power in 1949, it expanded the square. The party installed two huge

buildings on its east and west flanks — and placed a monument to heroes of the revolution in the middle.

"That all happened in the 1950s, basically to prepare for 1959, which was the 10th anniversary," says Yu Shuishan, an expert on Beijing's urban architecture at Northeastern University.

And the party had a model in mind. "Basically, copying Moscow," Yu says.

The square was to be a grand public venue, like the Soviet Union's Red Square, for parades and mass gatherings.

### **State power**

In the 1960s and '70s, Mao brought thousands of young Red Guards to Tiananmen Square to sing his praises during the Cultural Revolution.

There have been military parades for milestone anniversaries of the founding of the country, and celebrations for other major events, including the 2021 centenary of the establishment of the Communist Party of China.

Those big shows of state power jostled against other things happening in the square. In 1976, thousands gathered in Tiananmen Square spontaneously to mourn the death of Premier Zhou Enlai.

There were protests there in the 1980s — and in 1989, students took over the square for months — until the army crushed the movement.

Those protests, and the crackdown, broadcast across the world, brought the square more attention — and enhanced its significance and sensitivity.

Security in Tiananmen Square increased. But it was still possible to hang out there. People flew kites in the square. You could bike or skateboard there.

Sporadic demonstrations still occurred in the 1990s and 2000s. Most were small, and ended quickly in a swarm of plainclothes and uniformed police patrolling the square.

I've seen petitioners toss leaflets into the air at Tiananmen, and unfurl banners. Rep. Nancy Pelosi even did so in 1991 to memorialize demonstrators killed in 1989.

People have lit themselves on fire in Tiananmen Square in apparent protest.

And in 2013, extremists who the government said were linked to a separatist movement drove an SUV through a crowd, leaving several people dead, in front of Tiananmen Gate.

Security was again ratcheted up. Metal detectors and X-ray machines went in. During the coronavirus pandemic, the authorities added a digital booking system to enter — demanding IDs or passports, and controlling the number of people who go onto the square, ostensibly in the name of public health.

The booking system has remained in place.

"In the past, you could do anything there," says a 69-year-old man surnamed Liu, who has lived around the corner his whole life. He declined to tell NPR his full

name out of concern about speaking frankly to a foreign reporter.

"Now, you absolutely can't do anything."

Elizabeth Perry, an expert on Chinese politics and protests at Harvard University, says the intensified security reflects the insecurities of the current leadership.

Chinese President Xi Jinping "is very insecure," she says.

"Not that the party ever welcomed popular protest, but could certainly live with it. But I think that that sense has now disappeared and that any kind of protest, even if it's very limited demographically and geographically, is seen as potentially dangerous by the party," she adds.

Perry says that may relate to the way Xi has ruled — culling rivals with an anti-corruption campaign, consolidating power, abolishing term limits and putting the Communist Party back in the center of everyday life. Security has tightened across the board.

At the same time, the economy has been floundering. "There seems to be a kind of collective doom that the current leadership could be in place for a very long time, and there is no longer any institutionalized mechanism for leadership succession," she says.

Tourists don't seem bothered by the extra security at Tiananmen Square, which travelers consider a "must visit" in Beijing.

Xie Bin came from the city of Hangzhou to see the square with her kids, who were decked out in red stickers and little Chinese flags. She says it was a good experience.

"[The authorities] have their own considerations for making these restrictions, and as visitors we just need to respect the decision," she says on a street nearby.

In September, I tried to visit Tiananmen Square again, hoping the third time's a charm.

NPR requested permission through the Foreign Ministry, which contacted a government office that manages the square and the area around it. After waiting nearly a week, on a glorious early fall day, the request was granted.

I had been on the square countless times, as a tourist and as a student. In more recent years, I had visited as a journalist when foreign leaders were welcomed to China, or when the square was converted into a giant parking lot for party conclaves or sessions of parliament.

Years ago, it felt like an open, organic part of Beijing. Now, it feels like consecrated ground.

A group of tourists from China's northeast invited me to join them for a photo, with the famous portrait of Mao in the background.

I obliged, but we didn't talk. A government official and a police officer accompanied me on my visit to the square. And I had been told that interviews were off limits.

## Why Is China's Atheist Regime Trying to Pick the Next Dalai Lama?

15 November 2024, [Daily Signal](#), Bryan burack and Jack Erickson

The Chinese Communist Party is preparing to hijack an ancient faith. Freedom-loving people can't let it succeed.

In early September, dozens of high-ranking Tibetan Buddhist monks and religious scholars gathered in the Chinese city of Lanzhou to discuss reincarnation, a major tenet of their faith. Observers would be understandably perplexed by how the participants "emphasized the importance" of the approval of China's communist regime "in the recognition of reincarnated Tibetan religious leaders." The mystery has a simple, sinister answer: The meeting was organized by the Chinese Communist Party itself, through the Buddhist Association of China, a part of its United Front Work Department, which controls all religious expression in China.

Shamefully, the atheist CCP is attempting to reach into the afterlife to seize control of religious leaders that have escaped its grasp on earth.

The CCP's paranoia and brutality falls heavily on people of faith in China, and Tibetan Buddhists are among the most abused. The CCP's efforts to wipe out Tibetans' identity and establish complete control over their lives are thought to constitute crimes against humanity, and Tibet was a proving ground for techniques of repression used in the CCP's genocide against the Uyghurs.

The CCP is intensely hostile toward the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhism's highest spiritual leader, who escaped to India following the CCP's annexation of Tibet in the 1950s. Since then, the Dalai Lama has been an active proponent of greater autonomy for Tibetans, founding the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet's government-in-exile based in northern India.

For the CCP, Tibetans' veneration of the Dalai Lama constitutes a threat to its control over Tibet, which has seen periods of unrest incited by CCP repression. The future of the dalai lama as an institution is therefore linked to the future of Tibet itself.

Next year, the Dalai Lama turns 90 and is expected to announce plans for his reincarnation and succession. He has remarked that he may reincarnate outside of China, leaving the next dalai lama outside Chinese government control. He has also considered the possibility of choosing a successor while still alive. That would represent a break with the more common Buddhist tradition, whereby after the death of the dalai lama, a council of senior religious figures identifies a young boy as his successor and reincarnation.

The Dalai Lama has also suggested he may reincarnate as a woman, or even forgo reincarnation altogether.

For the CCP, the Dalai Lama's succession is an opportunity to seize even tighter control of the Tibetan Buddhist faith and ensure its practitioners no longer have a spiritual leader to look to beyond China's borders and outside the CCP's reach. The CCP has been preparing to hijack the Dalai Lama's succession for decades.

In 1995, the Dalai Lama identified a young boy in Tibet as the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama, the second-ranking religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Almost immediately thereafter, the CCP forcibly disappeared the then-6-year-old child, who has not been seen since. The CCP then appointed its own Panchen Lama. In 2007, the Chinese government released regulations stipulating that "[n]o group or individual may without authorization carry out any activities related to searching for or recognizing reincarnating living Buddha soul children." In recent years, China has emphasized that the reincarnation of the dalai lama "must comply with Chinese laws and regulations."

The United States recently enacted the Resolve Tibet Act, bipartisan legislation disputing the PRC's misleading historical claims over Tibet and urging Beijing to agree to talks with the Dalai Lama's representatives. In June, a bipartisan congressional delegation met with the Dalai Lama in northern India, warning that China is "trying to erase [Tibetans'] culture ... . They are trying something that we cannot let them get away with."

India also has a stake in preventing CCP subversion of the Dalai Lama's succession. Aside from hosting Tibet's government-in-exile, India's Tawang district sits within what was once part of the historical Tibetan nation and was the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. It's also the site of one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in the world. Beijing has opposed the Dalai Lama's visits to Tawang, as China claims the district as part of a broader "South Tibet."

Although India's deliberations surrounding the Dalai Lama's succession have largely remained muted, a former Indian ambassador to China stated that India wouldn't be "comfortable with China trying to control that process."

With the Dalai Lama's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday next July, discussion over his succession will come to a head soon. The CCP has been preparing for decades to turn the next dalai lama into a tool to advance Beijing's interests. The U.S. government is well aware of this plan. In its statement marking the Dalai Lama's 89<sup>th</sup> birthday, the State Department reiterated its support for Tibetans' "ability to freely choose and venerate religious leaders without interference."

But more than platitudes will be required, and the U.S. should be engaging now with representatives from the Dalai Lama's office, the Tibetan government in exile,

and the Indian government to better prepare for the succession.

The Chinese Communist Party cannot be allowed to quash the religious freedom of the Tibetan people and Buddhists worldwide.

### China's Commodification of Minorities

14 November 2024, [The Diplomat](#), Natasha L. Mikles

Beijing's preferred form of ethnic minority culture is a sanitized simulacrum featuring plays, theme parks, and other government attractions aimed at Han tourists.

This summer, I returned to China after nearly a decade to conduct fieldwork among Tibetan communities in Sichuan Province. As a scholar of Chinese and Tibetan culture who has spent significant time in China over the past two decades, I have had the opportunity to observe the transformations as Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Xi Jinping has centralized power and revitalized Chinese nationalism.

New, tightened restrictions became especially apparent on this most recent research trip, during which the government unexpectedly re-routed me from my Tibetan fieldwork sites. Instead of my planned research itinerary, I was led on a three-week tour of Yunnan Province by a CCP tour guide, who encouraged me to take the opportunity to "learn about the full richness of China's many other minority groups."

Throughout this spontaneous new itinerary, I was blocked from any meaningful encounter with Tibetans and instead shown a sanitized simulacrum of minority culture in the form of plays, theme parks, and other government attractions aimed at tourists from the Han majority ethnic group. In the new China of Xi Jinping, the cultures of China's 55 ethnic minorities have been turned into a simulated commodity for domestic tourists under the guise of economic development and cultural preservation. Meanwhile, actual expressions of ethnic identity are suppressed.

While this process has been underway for some time, the transformation was accelerated during the pandemic by the deployment of facial recognition software and greater police-state observation. The realities of domestic Han tourism in the new context of the 21st-century Chinese police state have produced an invisible wall that sequesters minority culture and ultimately silences or otherwise obscures minority voices.

#### An Unexpected Change

Shortly after arriving in China – and the day before my husband and I were supposed to begin driving from Chengdu toward the city of Derge – the company we had worked with to arrange our travel called an emergency meeting. The owner explained that the

CCP tourism bureau had barred our travel to the Tibetan regions of western Sichuan due to "floods."

After a tense conversation in which I suggested a myriad of other routes or itineraries, it became apparent that anywhere ethnic Tibetans lived in Sichuan or Qinghai province had "floods." Past experience had taught me that rhetorical games like this were a common tactic used by the Chinese government to deny access to people and places without explicitly saying "no." Proving this point, I later confirmed that many foreign tourists had visited these regions during the summer. There were no "floods." Either I had specifically been "graylisted" – allowed to enter China, but unable to go to any sensitive areas – or all foreign researchers like myself were barred from entry to Tibetan regions.

After scrubbing my research trip, the company offered a three-week trip through Yunnan, designed in consultation with both the national and provincial tourism bureaus. The next morning, our primary tour guide introduced herself as a CCP member who did not work for the company, but had been specifically asked to help culturally interpret for us on the trip. We traveled on a classic Yunnan tour that began in Kunming, and traveled through Lijiang, Dali, and Shangri-la, before eventually returning to Chengdu via Xichang.

While I was unable to do my planned research, the trip proved an eye-opening experience on how Han Chinese perceive and interact with minority culture.

#### Commodifying Minorities

The itinerary led us to a variety of sites created, primarily, for domestic Han tourists to experience China's ethnic minorities. Among these was the Yunnan Minorities Village in Yunnan's capital city of Kunming – a modern version of a "human zoo." In this sprawling park, each of Yunnan's 26 ethnic minorities has a pavilion showcasing their traditional homes, temples, and village life. Han guests are invited to interact with local representatives of the ethnic minority, each dressed in the most exaggerated representation of their traditional garb.

Especially popular with Han tourists are the performances, where a minority ensemble stages exuberant demonstrations of their traditional dances and songs. The emcee of each performance referred, in Mandarin, to the Han guests as "friends" (朋友) and invited everyone to dance along with his performers, often while making jokes to the audience about the simplicity of life in the minority villages outside the big city.

These dance experiences were echoed by other performances in Kunming, including the sold-out "Dynamic Yunnan." Created by celebrated Bai minority dancer Yang Liping, the show claims to preserve dying forms of minority dance in an extravagant two-hour performance featuring hundreds of dancers,

drummers, moving set pieces, and high-end lighting. The performance depicted minorities as alternately highly sexualized or deeply childlike, reflecting the “noble savage” trope ubiquitous in early Western anthropological literature. A shirtless drummer wearing only a loin cloth and drumming a song representing the sexual union of men and women was followed by a gaggle of minority women dressed as young girls making flirtatious gestures with their hands.

Despite its lauded claims to support indigenous dancers, I noted that only a few select minority groups were represented among the dancers. Such a distinction is not entirely surprising. Scholars like Colin Mackerras have noted that certain minority groups receive significantly greater government support and funding in the preservation of their performance traditions; these resources often are inversely related with the perceived threat of separatism the minority culture may represent.

Sometimes this leads to minority communities being written out of their performance tradition entirely. When the Beijing Dance Academy celebrated its 70th anniversary this fall, clips circulated on social media of the predominantly-Han faculty and staff performing traditional Tibetan folk dances as part of China’s dance heritage. I noted that Dynamic Yunnan’s dance representing the Tibetan people featured no ethnic Tibetan dancers and ultimately portrayed a community obsessed with Buddhist devotion and religious practice to the detriment of all else, including financial livelihood and personal health.

The mostly Han audience, seemingly unreflective or unconcerned by the stereotyped performance of Dynamic Yunnan, gave several standing ovations. After the performance, our driver told us that “before minority people can walk, they are dancing; before they can talk, they are singing.” While seemingly an innocent expression of appreciation for the vitality of minority culture, aphorisms like this reinforce a narrative of childlike innocence preserved only through the power and benevolence of the (Han) Chinese government.

I asked our tour guide if a member of an ethnic minority might one day rise to the level of CCP general secretary. At first, the question itself confused her, and I had to keep repeating it in differing formats. Eventually, however, she just shook her head and told us “no.”

As we drove further into Yunnan province from the capital city of Kunming, the widespread effects of China’s domestic tourism agenda became more apparent. Each small village we stopped at boasted an “ancient town” – a pedestrian pavilion designed to appear as a charming relic from an antiquated time – filled with stores owned by Han transplants selling identical factory-made knickknacks. These ancient

towns are the product of “folklorization,” wherein the particularities of a (minority) culture as it has historically been lived in a certain place are simplified into little more than a stylized picturesque photo opportunity.

And, indeed, photo opportunities did abound. Ancient towns bustled with young Han women who had rented minority costumes to walk around the picturesque setting. Many had hired photographers – usually local, minority men – to take dramatic photos of them as “tribal princesses” for sharing on social media. In Shangri-la, a historically Tibetan town that was renamed by the provincial government in 2001 to match the fictional paradise depicted in James Hilton’s 1933 novel “Lost Horizon,” I watched one such “tribal princess” unsure what to do with the Tibetan prayer wheel she had been handed as part of her costume. Continually tossing it in the air and trying to catch it again, she seemed uninterested in engaging with the Tibetan culture around her any more than necessary for the photo.

Smithsonian Institute folklorist Peter Seitel identifies this disinterest as a crucial feature of “folklorization.” When folklorized products and cultures are understood to be “other” to a dominant culture they are rendered “not as complex or meaningful as the products of high, elite, or official cultural processes.” Such items, therefore, are viewed as little more than a prop for photos.

#### **The Policing of Minorities**

The replacement of minority culture with a government simulacrum is aided by the startlingly effective use of facial recognition and virtual monitoring software to further isolate individuals from authentic relationships with minority peoples. After the government changed our itinerary, I immediately messaged my research contacts and friends on WeChat, the ubiquitous social media app popular in China. Explaining our experience honestly in writing over a virtual network, however, could raise the attention of an observation bot or a Public Security Bureau (PSB) officer and put my contacts in danger.

As a result, we had very coded conversations, where any significant communication had to be hidden between the lines of pleasantries. After explaining that it was “unsafe” to travel to western Sichuan due to weather and that I was disappointed that I could not see my friends, they assured me that “Yunnan is beautiful this time of year.” I understood with this message that there was nothing that could be done to get me to my fieldwork site.

While I’ve always had some concerns about observation while traveling in China, my fears were more pronounced on this most recent trip. On July 1, 2024, China introduced a law that PSB officers and border agents can look through laptops and cellular phones without a warrant. Knowing that I had



potentially already been graylisted and could be under special scrutiny, all texts, social media posts, and emails had to be circumspect and speak in shadow language lest a PSB agent pick up any concerning words or phrases at a casual glance.

In practice, this took the unlikely form as encoding my research notes during travel in the form of a “Dungeons & Dragons” adventure, where an adventuring party (my husband and I) traveled through a potentially hostile place (the Vagosi Empire) to learn about a small minority culture (the Erinvale tribe). I hoped the language of swords and spells might confuse a PSB agent looking for a specific list of banned topics.

Similarly, China’s lauded facial recognition software became a constant source of anxiety whenever I spoke with Tibetans and other minorities. Because my husband and I were Americans, some individuals I met on our tour felt comfortable sharing candid thoughts about the CCP government, the political situation for minorities, or the limits on religious freedom that have become normalized in China. In previous times, such conversations would become important parts of my research highlighting the lived practice of minority religious life in China.

While writing my research notes, however, I realized how the new facial recognition software meant that it was impossible to fully anonymize my conversation partners. As a result, I could never discuss their experiences or share their voices in my research. In these ways, just the threat of the Chinese police state’s powers creates a form of self-imposed isolation that not only achieves their goal of silencing criticism, but also bars those outside of China from hearing authentic experiences and opinions from minority cultures.

### **Conclusions**

After three weeks of travel through Yunnan, I was denied access to actual minority culture and instead shown a state-approved rendering of minority cultures. These simulacra are built for an audience of Han tourists and promote the distorted image of a unified, multiethnic China. Previously China’s ethnic minorities had enjoyed some agency in how they presented themselves and the freedom to express authentically their own culture, but as we toured staged “ancient towns” and sat through stylized minority dance performances, it was apparent this was the minority culture China wanted us to see.

In her work on state-led economic development among ethnic minorities in China, Charlene Makley has described the “silent pact” between Tibetans and Han Chinese in the People’s Republic of China. By remaining silent on the complex histories between the two communities and the implications inherent to competing structures of religious and political authority, both communities have been able

to maintain an uneasy peace that provides the ground for mutual economic prosperity, at least in theory. Such a pact exists between many ethnic minorities and the CCP government. My trip demonstrated, however, that this unspoken arrangement has also laid the groundwork for a more insidious transformation of culture. No longer is it only political and religious histories that are not being discussed, but authentic cultural self-expression as well. Where the silent pact had existed previously, there now was a silent wall.

In a cruel twist of timing, my travel coincided with the closure of one of the last remaining private Tibetan schools – a bastion of Tibetan culture and one of the very last places in China where classes could be taught, at least in part, in the Tibetan language. Some social media commentators called it the start of a “second cultural revolution.” Among my colleagues who study Tibetan culture, there have been quiet discussions of looking for new research sites outside of China that are less politically volatile. We have the privilege to make that decision, but it only leaves Tibetan friends and colleagues within China further isolated.

The night I discovered I would be unable to pursue my fieldwork, I lay awake obsessively digging through my past to try and understand what might have made me problematic in the eyes of the Chinese government. Was it that article I published using social theory to highlight how the CCP was secularizing Tibetan culture to serve the needs of a multiethnic state? Was it the conference I attended in Dharamshala at which the Dalai Lama had unexpectedly been a guest? Was it the blog article I shared on my social media about the protests in Derge aimed at protecting several important Buddhist monasteries from a planned hydroelectric dam?

Above all, my mind kept returning to my friends and Tibetan colleagues trapped behind the new silent wall of the Chinese police state. As an international student at Tibet University early in my academic career, I had watched Tibetan friends gathering every Friday night to dance together the traditional circle dances from their home villages. Those memories remain for me a powerful expression of a people working to maintain their traditional culture in a hostile environment. Now, 15 years later and staring at the ceiling of a Chengdu hotel room, I wondered to myself if they were still dancing on that night – not for Han tourists or white friends stumbling through conversations in broken Tibetan, but for themselves – desperately fighting to preserve their culture as a government sought to box it ever more into a neatly packaged commodity.

## China Is Recalculating Its Middle East Policy

14 November 2024, [The Diplomat](#), Tommy Steiner

Iran experiences diplomatic distancing with Chinese characteristics.

Since the October 7th massacre in southern Israel and the outbreak of the war in Gaza, China's leadership has conveyed outright support in word and deed for the Iran-led "Axis of Resistance." The display of strategic vulnerability by Iran and its proxies since mid-August appears to have prompted Beijing to pause and reassess. Upon return from the National Day holiday in early October, China's official messaging on Iran noticeably shifted. This adjustment has been further underscored by commentary from Chinese policy advisers specializing in the Middle East.

As events on the ground led to a review of its Middle East policies, China is refraining from outright public support of Iran and the Axis of Resistance it leads, at least for the time being. This is borne out by the striking difference between China's response to Iran's missile and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) attack on Israel in mid-April and its reaction to the latest ballistic missile attack on Israel by Iran on October 1. Similarly, the Chinese response to Israel's retaliatory strike on Iran on October 28 reflected this revised approach. While the Foreign Ministry refrained from condemning Israel *per se* for its most recent attack, one of China's most respected Middle East policy advisers all but justified it in an op-ed published in the China Daily.

### A Tale of Two Telephone Calls

The day after the first Iranian drone and missile attack on Israel, on April 15, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a phone call with his then-Iranian counterpart, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, and showcased China's steadfast support to Iran. The Chinese Foreign Ministry's official readout quoted Wang as all but endorsing Iran's barrage of drones and missiles on Israel:

*China has noted that Iran stated that the actions taken by Iran were limited and that it was exercising its right to self-defense ... China appreciates Iran's emphasis on not targeting regional countries and neighboring countries, and reaffirming its continued pursuit of a policy of good-neighborliness and friendship. China believes that Iran can handle the situation well and avoid further destabilization while safeguarding Iran's sovereignty and dignity.*

Less than six months later, Beijing changed its stance. In the midst of the Chinese national holiday, on October 2, in response to Iran's mass missile attack on Israel, the Foreign Ministry's spokesperson in response simply stated that "China is deeply concerned about the turbulence in the Middle East."

Following mounting international reports regarding potential Israeli retaliatory operations against Iran, on

October 9, the Chinese ministry's spokesperson reiterated the "deep concerns" over the instability in the Middle East and the need to prevent escalation. At the daily briefing, a reporter's pointed question, which included extreme scenarios of Israeli attacks on Iran's strategic sites and anticipated harsh criticism of Israel, resulted only in a measured expression of concern. The spokesperson merely called on all parties to "manage the current situation in a calm, rational and responsible manner from the perspective of preserving regional peace and stability." This response amounts to China diplomatically distancing itself from Iran.

Five days later, on October 14, Wang called up his new Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi. This time around, the official Chinese readout of the call conspicuously avoided any possible hint or suggestion that China approves of Iran's missile attacks. While the readout commended Tehran's diplomatic outreach to Arab countries, it implied subtle criticism noting that China "opposed taking adventurous military actions and called on all parties to do more to maintain regional peace and stability." Beijing's readout even seemed to present Iran as apologetic, stating that the Iranian minister promised to strengthen communication and coordination with China to "cool down" the regional situation. Rather than demonstrating close China-Iran relations, the call reinforced Beijing's new "even-handed" approach toward Iran.

### China's Tempered Stance Toward Israel

The distancing of Iran was reinforced by the parallel toning down of Chinese animosity toward Israel, which had become rife since the October 7 massacre. The linkage between the diplomatic distancing of Iran and toning down criticism toward Israel was demonstrated on the day China's foreign minister spoke with his Iranian counterpart – a conversation that came after a call between Wang and Israel's foreign minister, Israel Katz.

The most striking example of this rhetorical adjustment is the formal statement by Lin Jian, the Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson, following Israel's retaliatory strike on Iran on October 26. In the daily briefing of October 28, Lin sidestepped a leading question asked by a reporter from Russia's TASS that anticipated condemning Israel. The reporter alleged the Israeli attack led to "exacerbating the escalation of the conflict and endangering civilians." Instead, Lin noted that China "opposes infringing upon the sovereignty and security of other countries and opposes resorting to the use of force," and called on "all parties concerned" to "avoid further raising the overall security risks." Despite official condemnations of Israel from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the spokesperson refrained from even the slightest condemnation.

The Chinese envoy to the United Nations, however, was critical of Israel even though he refrained from specifically and straightforwardly expressing condemnation. Rather, he stated that “China condemns acts that violate Iran’s sovereignty and territorial integrity...” Despite his harsh criticism of Israel during the U.N. Security Council hearing convened on October 28, his careful wording spoke volumes.

### **Chinese Policy Advisers Rethink Iran**

This shift in China’s official public messaging regarding Iran aligns with public commentary by Chinese policy advisers specializing in the Middle East. Professor Liu Zhongmin, head of the well-respected Middle East Studies Institute at Shanghai International Studies University, asserted that “the Axis of Resistance led by Iran has suffered significant losses and even a complete failure. The export of the revolution by Iran and ideological diplomacy has reached an unsustainable dead end.” In a subsequent piece, Liu argued that Iran and its proxies have harmed the Palestinian cause.

Similarly, a researcher from the think tank affiliated with China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the China Institute of International Studies, commented on Iran’s nuclear policy. Responding to a statement from an Iranian lawmaker that Iran is considering withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Li Zixin warned that such a move would constitute crossing a red line that goes against Iran’s own interests.

Notably, any change in China’s public stance on Iran is likely to be limited, at least in the near term. This is not the first time that China has distanced itself from Iran, as it repeatedly sided with the UAE over a bilateral border dispute. Furthermore, a recent study by a Chinese policy adviser contended that the Chinese-Iranian bilateral relationship is held back by “little political mutual trust” and that Beijing is less keen on deepening the relationship than Tehran. Notwithstanding, China has other strategic considerations involving Iran, particularly in Afghanistan, a neighbor of both countries and where Iran holds influence, and in the broader context of China’s partnership with Russia, to which Iran contributes militarily.

### **Is China Recalibrating Its Middle East Ambitions?**

The current dynamics – marked by Iranian setbacks and strategic vulnerability – have challenged China’s Middle East strategy since October 7. Beijing’s steadfast support to Tehran was based on the assessment that Iran and its proxies could advance China’s interests and influence in the region by thwarting the Saudi-Israeli normalization. Furthermore, Chinese policy advisers were confident that Beijing was on the way to assuming a key role in “Middle East Security Governance,” as extensively

outlined in a paper published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Following Beijing’s role in the 2023 Saudi-Iran agreement, Chinese leaders and diplomats considered the Middle East as a key arena for validating one of their key initiatives – the Global Security Initiative (GSI).

Understanding it cannot rely on Iran to advance its strategic interests in the Middle East has had a broader impact on China’s approach to the Middle East, even beyond adjusting its rhetoric on Israel. Considering recent Chinese expert commentary that noted the limits on China’s influence in the Middle East, this experience may have somewhat curbed Beijing’s strategic ambitions in the region, including applying the GSI in the Middle East. Thus, Beijing’s shifting position toward Tehran and its Axis of Resistance might well evolve into a strategic turning point in China’s Middle East policy.

### **Analysis: Xi Jinping to keep chasing Chinese dream despite Donald Trump’s return**

14 November 2024, [Nikkei Asia](#), Katsuji Nakazawa

It was Xi, not Trump, who triggered the accelerating U.S.-China decoupling

It was a prelude to the second round of the Xi Jinping vs. Donald Trump matchup.

Xi, the president and Chinese Communist Party general secretary, sent a congratulatory message to U.S. President-elect Trump shortly after the Republican was voted back into the White House on Nov. 5.

Trump will be formally sworn into office in January for a second four-year term and appears ready to amp up the U.S.’s rivalry with China, which began during Trump’s first term.

In his message to Trump, the Chinese leader pointed out that “history tells us that both China and the U.S. stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation,” according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

But the spokesperson denied a U.S. media report that Xi called Trump to congratulate him on his U.S. presidential election victory.

Xi took the party’s helm in November 2012. When the first round of the Xi-Trump matchup began about eight years ago, Xi was rapidly consolidating power while serving his first five-year term as China’s supreme leader.

He was also seeking to further boost his political standing at home. At the time, everything seemed to be going smoothly for him.

In fact, he acquired a special status that put him on par with Mao Zedong, the founding father of “a new China,” or the People’s Republic of China, and Deng Xiaoping, who initiated and promoted “reform and opening-up.”

The sixth plenary session, or plenum, of the party's 18th Central Committee, ended on Oct. 27, 2016, after positioning Xi as the "core" of the party. Less than two weeks later, Trump won his first presidential election. At the time, China perceived Trump, a business tycoon, as "a merchant," and thought he would be easier to deal with than Hillary Clinton, his Democratic opponent in the election. Clinton had taken a tough stance toward Beijing regarding human rights and democracy.

With Trump's defeat of Clinton, however, China and Xi personally were expecting favorable relations with the U.S.

In the eight years since, Xi has lost some of his momentum. The cult of personality built around him within the party now shows signs of weakening, and the Chinese economy is weakening.

Popular opinion might be that Trump's China policy, which delivered a serious economic blow to China, was to blame for the U.S.-China decoupling. Even in China, many people believe the root cause of the decoupling lies in Trump's China policy.

But the truth is that the decoupling was triggered by China long before Trump's first presidency. Trump's high-profile China policy just made it apparent and accelerated matters.

Xi made an important remark leading to the decoupling 12 years ago. It came during the party's 18th national congress in November 2012, immediately before he was elected as party general secretary.

Then-Vice President Xi warned during the congress that the Chinese economy was being "hijacked" by the U.S. and pledged to correct the situation.

Xi sounded his warning in secret and off the record. But it was in the era of his predecessor, Hu Jintao, when unfettered discussions were still possible as long as they were held only within the party. Xi's "hijacked" remark was leaked and became widely known.

As he pledged in November 2012, Xi began maneuvering to gradually weaken strong U.S. influence over China's economy and to eventually realize the "Chinese dream" of becoming the world's most powerful country.

After becoming China's leader, Xi started to pursue the country's economic self-reliance and technological hegemony more clearly than expected. These ambitions received fresh attention amid the trade war between China and the U.S. under the first Trump administration.

At the party's 19th national congress in 2017, Xi also declared China "will basically realize socialist modernization by 2035," bringing forward China's modernization target by about 15 years.

Previously, China had targeted 2049 -- the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic of China's

founding -- to catch up with and overtake the U.S. militarily and economically.

Alarmed by China's ambitious 2035 target, the Trump administration began to launch counterattacks, as symbolized by its trade war with China.

Setting the target of realizing the Chinese dream by 2035 also had a significant political meaning: Xi would remain at the helm until the 2030s.

After the 2035 target was set in 2017, Xi's extended reign, not only beyond the party's 20th national congress in 2022 but also beyond its 21st national congress in 2027, began to be perceived as a fait accompli.

Only several months after the 2035 goal was set at the party's 19th national congress, Xi also pushed through a constitutional revision to allow presidents to serve more than two five-year terms. The surprise revision has paved the way for Xi to be crowned president for life.

There was another important development related to decoupling at the party's 19th national congress in 2017.

The "comprehensive national security concept" was enshrined in the party's constitution. This made clear national security came before the economy. As such, national security-related legislation was considerably strengthened.

In China, the term "security" covers a range of concerns, including regime security. China remains vigilant against a color revolution, which refers to the democratization protests that began sweeping through the former Soviet Union and other countries at the turn of the century, toppling some long-time dictatorships. Many of these mass movements were named after colors or flowers.

When Xi talks about national security, he is saying he intends to stamp out any such movement early on.

Xi's security state has heaped enormous pressure on private companies in China. Four years ago, the initial public offering of Ant Group -- the financial subsidiary of Alibaba Group Holding -- was suddenly shelved. Market players speculate it was because Alibaba founder Jack Ma had made a critical remark about China's financial authorities.

Xi, 71, is strong-willed and stubborn. He tends to barrel ahead with some policies regardless of how they impact the Chinese economy.

As a result, the situation in which Xi saw the Chinese economy being "hijacked" by the U.S. has drastically changed since the president first expressed a sense of crisis 12 years ago.

The U.S.-China decoupling has progressed at a far faster pace than expected. Amid the ongoing process, the flow of foreign direct investment into China from the free world, led by the U.S., has been on a downward trend.

Trump returns to the White House in January. During his election campaign, he vowed to impose import tariffs of as high as 60% on Chinese goods. He also slapped high tariffs on imports from China during his first presidency, sparking a tit-for-tat tariff war between the countries.

When he takes the presidency again in two months, Trump will find a Chinese economy that is in dire straits, quite different than the juggernaut it was in 2017, when Trump's first four-year term began. However, despite Trump's tariff threat, abandoning China's self-reliance is not an option for Xi.

Furthermore, as the decoupling has accelerated far faster than expected, the probability of China overtaking the U.S. economically by 2035 has considerably declined.

Xi still has no choice but to go full throttle toward the 2035 goal. If he fails to realize his Chinese dream, questions will be raised about whether he will be able to extend his rule beyond 2027, when the party's 21st national congress convenes.

Trump's second administration, which goes to January 2029, presents a big external hurdle to Xi and his 2035 timeline. The Chinese president is thus bracing for the return of the unpredictable and freewheeling "merchant."

### **Future global economy to be shaped by India, China: Experts**

14 November 2024, [Deccan Herald](#)

Experts shared their views and opinions on the two countries at the inaugural workshop pointing out that China and India, the world's first and third-largest economies by purchasing power parity, wield immense global influence.

Singapore: Singapore and the Southeast Asian region should continue to closely engage with both India and China, given the two countries' vital roles in regional growth and development, the city state's Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sim Ann said on Thursday.

She underlined the significance of China and India as economic powerhouses and pivotal players on the global stage at an inaugural event for a series by two think tanks that are to examine key issues related to China and India and their roles in the global economy. The senior Singaporean minister was speaking at the launch of the series 'China and India: Two Giants Shaping the Global Economy' to be held jointly by the East Asian Institute (EAI) and the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Experts shared their views and opinions on the two countries at the inaugural workshop pointing out that China and India, the world's first and third-largest

economies by purchasing power parity, wield immense global influence.

The two countries together account for 35 per cent of the global population and are projected to contribute 50 per cent of global economic growth in 2024.

The launch event was also addressed by leading experts, scholars and researchers, including Dr Li Li, Deputy Director of the Institute of International Relations (IIR) at Tsinghua University, and Professor C Raja Mohan, Visiting Research Professor at ISAS.

EAI Director Alfred Schipke said, "China and India stand as pivotal pillars in the global economic landscape, their combined potential driving half of the world's economic growth in the coming years. As key players in trade and innovation, their influence extends beyond borders, shaping policies and addressing global challenges." The two NUS research institutes will jointly organise workshops and public events to examine China and India's growth strategies and their broader impact on the global economy from a policy perspective by bringing together academics, policymakers, practitioners and business leaders.

ISAS director Iqbal Singh Sevea noted that both India and China are pivotal to the future of digitalisation and the transition to the green economy.

"Overall, the global order is evolving, and the future of the global economy will be shaped by India and China. Thus, we must understand the impact these two countries will have on global trends," he said.

### **India's Troubled Truce with China**

13 November 2024, [Project Syndicate](#), Shashi Tharoor

*The recent agreement between India and China ending their years-long military standoff along their shared Himalayan border was motivated, from India's side, largely by economic considerations. But whatever benefits India reaps from increased Chinese investment will probably disappoint – especially given the likely costs.*

NEW DELHI – In June 2020, incursions by Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops into the fraught borderlands of India's Ladakh region triggered bloody clashes that killed 20 Indian soldiers, plunged bilateral relations to their lowest point in decades, and led to a prolonged military standoff. Now, China and India have reached a truce, though many in India would prefer to hold their applause until they see how it is implemented.

Since the 2020 violence, India has made it clear that bilateral relations would remain frozen until China took steps to restore the *status quo ante* at the border. After all, China's unprovoked encroachments across the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh are to blame for disturbing the peace in the first place.



To show it meant business, India slowed down approvals of Chinese investments; tightened visa approvals for Chinese nationals; and canceled direct flights between the two countries. Moreover, India toughened its stance on Chinese territorial claims in the Pacific, and made pointed political gestures that were bound to displease China, like responding warmly to the Taiwanese president's congratulatory message after Modi's re-election (China opposes all official interactions between Taiwanese authorities and countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations).

While the recent truce suggests that China has finally gotten the message, it is difficult to shake the impression that India was the more anxious of the two parties to reach an agreement. In fact, India's economic establishment appears largely convinced that, far from pursuing a strategy of decoupling – or at least “de-risking” – vis-à-vis China, India should be using Chinese capital to fill its own investment gaps.

Given that bilateral trade has reached its highest-ever levels, despite the political tensions, it comes as no surprise that India's business community has reportedly been pressing the government to conclude an agreement that would facilitate economic engagement. In July, the government's chief economic adviser openly advocated a strategy that would increase Chinese investments in India and deepen Indian integration into Chinese supply chains.

Over the last few months, a number of straws in the wind indicated that an agreement to end the Ladakh standoff was forthcoming. On September 12, Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar remarked that about 75% of the “disengagement” problems with China along the LAC in eastern Ladakh had been sorted out. Later that day, Ajit Doval, India's national security adviser, met with Wang Yi, the influential director of the Communist Party of China's foreign affairs commission, in St. Petersburg, with indications of an agreement to “work with urgency” to “realize complete disengagement in the remaining areas.”

Conciliatory commentaries and statements by China's new ambassador to India in the Indian media reinforced the impression that both sides were attempting to lay the groundwork for reconciliation. And a deal did soon emerge, allowing both China and India to resume patrols along the frontier.

But significant areas of concern remain. For starters, as the political commentator Brahma Chellaney observed, when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping met on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan, just days after the deal was announced, their respective ministries produced very different statements. Whereas India described the accord as a step toward a “multipolar Asia and a multipolar world,” China

referred only to a “multipolar world.” The implication was subtle but clear: Asia belongs to China.

More broadly, China's actions along the LAC have signaled a clear desire to keep India off balance by taking steps to shift the border in ways more favorable to its own interests. This mirrors China's assertive approach to advancing its territorial ambitions elsewhere along its shared border with India, and in the South China Sea.

It is worth remembering how the last standoff between India and China, focused on the Doklam plateau in Bhutan, ended. India does not claim Doklam, but it does support Bhutan's claim, which China disputes. Moreover, a major Indian highway runs below the plateau, connecting India's northeastern states to the rest of the country. So, when China deployed troops to build a Chinese highway in Doklam, India sent troops to stop the project.

In that case, the two sides took just a few months to reach an agreement, which looked much like the recent Ladakh deal. Since then, however, the Chinese outflanked India by building a road elsewhere on the Doklam plateau to achieve the same result. The PLA now overlooks a vital Indian highway.

China's conduct follows a clear pattern: create new facts on the ground, deploy forces to positions from which they can intimidate (and, potentially, attack) India, and wear India down with protracted diplomacy. In the meantime, encourage India to increase its dependence on Chinese imports and dangle the investment carrot before Indian business leaders.

Yet the promised economic benefits of the two sides' recent rapprochement are unlikely to materialize. The Chinese have not lifted a finger to address India's huge bilateral trade deficit – which soared to \$101 billion in 2022, from \$70 billion in 2021 – or to lower the barriers Indian companies face when trying to access the Chinese market.

Moreover, all indications point to Chinese investment in low-value-added industries, rather than sectors involving technology transfer, even as Chinese companies pursue acquisitions in sensitive sectors in India. There are also massive opportunity costs: greater economic integration with China would surely make India less attractive to global companies seeking to reduce their exposure to the People's Republic.

Add to that China's long track record of exporting its way out of economic trouble and weaponizing other countries' economic vulnerabilities, and it seems clear that India should proceed with caution. Until China credibly demonstrates its good intentions, the truce in Ladakh warrants little celebration.

## To China, Trump is 'poison'

13 November 2024, [The Hill](#), Gordon G. Chang

"Trump and Kamala Harris are two bowls of poison for Beijing," said Zhao Minghao of Shanghai's Fudan University, to the Financial Times. "Both see China as a competitor or even an adversary."

The poison analogy has, unfortunately, caught on in elite Chinese circles.

Renmin University's Shi Yinhong, one of China's most widely quoted academics, said China's hope was that the "lesser of the two evils" would be elected. To the dismay of Chinese leaders who already had to deal with Trump for four years, they have not gotten the preferred outcome and are not looking forward to another term.

During the campaign, Americans perceived Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump's China policies as widely divergent. Chinese observers, on the other hand, viewed them as largely the same.

To China's Communist Party and its tightly controlled academic community, America has taken on a menacing view. As a result, the gap in perceptions between Americans and Chinese is wide. In the last half-decade, it has appeared to have widened even more so.

Officially, Beijing wants to get along with America. President Xi Jinping, in a congratulatory message to Trump, talked about finding "the right way for China and the United States to get along with each era in the new era."

Xi's foreign ministry said China has maintained an unchanging stance toward the U.S.

"China's policy on the U.S. is consistent," Mao Ning, foreign ministry spokesperson, said after the election. "We will continue to view and handle our bilateral relations under the principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation."

Other official comments have not been so benign. In May 2019, People's Daily, the party's self-described "mouthpiece" and most authoritative publication in China, carried a landmark editorial declaring a "people's war" on America.

Americans may think they can ignore hostile propaganda, but this phrase has had special meaning for the Communist Party.

"A people's war is a total war, and its strategy and tactics require the overall mobilization of political, economic, cultural, diplomatic, military and other power resources, the integrated use of multiple forms of struggle and combat methods," declared a column carried in March 2023 by PLA Daily, an official news website of the People's Liberation Army. The army reports to the Party.

Why does China's ruling organization display such hostility? The Communist Party of China views the U.S.

as an existential threat not because of anything Americans have ever said or done but because of who they are and what they stand for.

An insecure ruling organization in Beijing is afraid of the inspirational impact on the Chinese people of America's ideals and form of governance. This means even in the best of times, America's mere existence is considered a direct threat to communist rule.

The perceived threat to the party was heightened when Trump was in the Oval Office. In his first term, he was widely popular among ordinary Chinese in China. There are many explanations for this phenomenon, but the most fundamental, I think, is that he was then — as he is now — abhorred by the privileged.

The Chinese people, therefore, identify with Trump, who led a revolt against America's coastal business, cultural and academic classes.

"I deeply resent the hypocritical smug elites and heartily welcome the return of Trump's salt-of-the-earth approach," said Charles Burton of the Sinopsis think tank to me last week. "I think the Chinese people see it the same way as tens of millions of Americans who cast their ballots for the billionaire outsider."

"Trump gives the Chinese people the inspiration that they too can sweep away their elites," Burton added. Moreover, Trump provided ordinary Chinese with a contrast with their leaders. Xi Jinping almost never appears in public except on formal occasions. On the extremely rare occasions when he goes out among the people — as he did in December 2013 when visiting a Beijing steamed bun shop, for instance — the event is staged by propaganda officials.

Xi is always scripted and humorless, speaking in a stilted Communist Party lingo heavily laced with ideological phrasing. His predecessor, Hu Jintao, was even less lifelike. Trump, of course, is the opposite, unfiltered and always ready to break convention. He is the breath (gale-force wind?) of fresh air.

Di Dongsheng of Beijing's Renmin University, in a widely publicized November 2020 live-streamed event in China, spoke about how Chinese leaders had in the past used Wall Street — "the core power of the United States" as he put it — and "old friends" to tell American presidents what to do. Di also said that these links to the White House had been broken during the Trump years. Trump, in short, was not inclined to take advice from East Coast elitists.

So it's no mystery why Chinese leaders think Trump is poisonous. They fear they can't talk to him through their upper-class friends in America — and they want him nowhere near the lower rungs of China.

## India needs to leverage Trump's China antipathy

13 November 2024, [ORF](#), Harsh V. pant, Kalpit A Mankikar

*Trump's return raises questions about his China policy, offering India a chance to attract investment amid U.S.-China tensions.*

The electoral victory of Donald Trump, and his comeback as the United States (US) president, has led to speculation as to the contours of his administration's policies with respect to the Indo-Pacific region.

US presidents are said to get more ambitious in their second term, and if the past is prologue, Trump 2.0 may have a profound impact on the US's China policy. This is because, in his first term, Trump changed Washington's fundamental engagement with Beijing. Since the normalisation of relations between the two nations in the late 1970s, cooperation in economic, scientific and cultural spheres flourished. Trump mooted de-coupling, meaning the gradual severing of the intertwining between the two.

*Under the terms of the trade deal that China signed, it agreed to increase purchases of American products, address issues related to intellectual property, and give American financial institutions greater market access.*

He also sought to address challenges in trade, geopolitics and security. The Sino-U.S. trade war escalated on the back of the Trump administration levying tariffs on Chinese imports to reduce the trade deficit. Under the terms of the trade deal that China signed, it agreed to increase purchases of American products, address issues related to intellectual property, and give American financial institutions greater market access. The Trump administration labelled Xi Jinping's China as a strategic rival. Thus, national security concerns became paramount and led to curbs on Chinese investment in sensitive sectors, restrictions on Chinese majors like Huawei and ZTE, and a thrust on countering Chinese influence in telecom networks, cellphone app ecosystems, and cloud computing.

The Biden administration has built on this foundation, constricting flows of sensitive technology, investment and human capital to China. It is also seeking to have its allies on board with the curbs on semiconductors. As Xi's China set much store by technology like electric vehicles, the US hit back with tariffs on the same. Thus, the political agenda across Republican and Democrat administrations has been to escalate measures that China perceives as seeking to contain it.

On the campaign trail, Trump sought to restore American primacy in manufacturing and zeroed in on Xi's China Manufacturing initiative that seeks to build dominance in important sectors like advanced information technology, high-end numerical control machinery, robotics, aviation equipment, maritime

engineering technology, sophisticated rail equipment, energy-saving vehicles, electrical equipment, agricultural machinery, biopharmaceuticals and high-performance medical devices. He has called for higher tariffs on Chinese goods. Trump's China perception is also coloured by his notion that Xi's mishandling of Covid-19 led to his rout in the 2020 election. This antipathy may translate into a tumultuous relationship.

*The economic slump and deteriorating relations between the US and China have taken the lustre off Beijing as an attractive investment destination for American firms.*

For China, Trump's return has stoked worries over its political and economic trajectories. Xi has expressed fears that there may be attempts to dislodge the Communist Party through regime change; this has found resonance even among the general public. Economists speculate that it may not achieve its intended gross domestic product (GDP) growth target of about 5%. The economic slump and deteriorating relations between the US and China have taken the lustre off Beijing as an attractive investment destination for American firms. European businesses operating in China have voiced concerns that diminishing returns for capital invested did not justify the risks of operating in the Chinese market. They believe the problems in the Chinese market will linger unresolved, and they will have to rethink staying invested in China on account of regulatory issues, priority to state-owned businesses in government procurement, market-access hurdles, and overcapacity. This is also compounded by US tech companies exiting China amid geopolitical tensions.

India should try to leverage the churn to its advantage. Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi has been one of the first leaders to connect with Trump after his win. Modi has sought to build on the relations developed during the first Trump presidency. The question is can India use the disenchantment of the West with China to attract more investment? Under the first Trump presidency, military cooperation flourished as evidenced by the signing of the foundational agreements. While India and China have taken steps to address the military standoff along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), Delhi must improve its defence-industrial complex to bolster its deterrent potential. A defining feature of Trump's first term was the emergence of minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific. Under Trump, Quad was resurrected in 2017. As Pakistan goes under, and terrorism re-emerges in Kashmir, India must engage with Trump who was receptive to Indian concerns in his first innings. There can be much closer cooperation between Washington and New Delhi on India's neighbourhood where divergences have been slowly emerging in the last few years.

## Trump's return to White House spells uncertainty for U.S.-China relationship

12 November 2024, [CBC](#), Lisa Xing

Policies could jeopardize trade relations, allow Beijing to assert itself on global stage

Donald Trump's return to the White House is sure to be felt globally, including in China — one of the United States' biggest trading partners and an emerging superpower on the world stage.

The uncertainty of the next few years could be seen in the response from Beijing.

As Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated Trump on his Nov. 5 election win, he also issued a warning, saying the two countries "gain from co-operation and lose from confrontation," according to a post on X, formerly Twitter, from Xie Feng, China's ambassador to Washington.

"There's no formula," said Lynette Ong, a distinguished professor in Chinese politics at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. "[Trump's] brand is ... a lack of predictability."

During Trump's first term as president after his election in 2016, the relationship between him and Xi began jovially but crumbled during the COVID-19 pandemic and an ensuing trade war. It wasn't until November 2023 that relations began to normalize after Xi and U.S. President Joe Biden met in San Francisco on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation summit.

The incoming president, though, who won a sweeping victory over Kamala Harris a week ago, has repeatedly vowed to impose punishing tariffs of up to 60 per cent on imports from China, which would further disrupt the already weakened Chinese economy.

Geopolitical implications also loom for Trump's second term, especially if he continues to withdraw from the international stage, putting Taiwan's future in question.

"There's definitely a lot of anxiety among businesses in China and also in Beijing among the leaders," said Jia Wang, senior fellow and senior adviser at the China Institute at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

### Trade implications

The foremost, and likely most immediate concern, is the issue of trade, as Trump indicated in February in an interview with Fox News that he plans to slap 60 per cent tariffs on all Chinese imports (along with a blanket 10 per cent tariff on all imports into the U.S.) — a blow to the world's second-largest economy.

Not only are the rates higher than the tariff of up to 25 per cent levied during his first term, but China's economy isn't as resilient as it was during that period. Since the pandemic, there has been a downturn in the country's real estate market with slumping home prices and sales, along with rising government debt and unemployment.

The Biden administration stayed the course, imposing a 100 per cent surtax on Chinese-made electric vehicles, 50 per cent on computer chips and 25 per cent on EV batteries, aluminum and steel. Canada matched the 100 per cent tariff this fall, to mixed reviews from analysts, and a 25 per cent surtax on steel and aluminum imports from China began on Oct. 15.

"There's going to have to be more focus on the [Chinese] domestic economy," said Han Shen Lin, who works in Shanghai as the China country director for Washington-based consultancy firm The Asia Group.

Indeed, China has been trying to do just that. As recently as this past summer, officials like Premier Li Qiang said the country would focus on diversifying its markets and boosting domestic demand instead of relying on exports as trade tensions escalate globally. It has rolled out various stimulus measures in recent months.

Considering China exported in excess of \$400 billion US worth of goods to the United States in 2023, according to the United States Census Bureau, focusing on consumption domestically won't happen overnight.

"They will require a tremendous amount of consumer confidence," the University of Alberta's Wang said.

### U.S. could turn inward

While China is attempting to transition its economy, the geopolitical landscape could also shift if Trump's first term is any indication, potentially benefiting Beijing.

Under Trump, the U.S. withdrew from multiple international agreements, including the Paris Agreement on climate change, the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the United Nations Human Rights Council.

If he continues to turn inward, there would be a shift in global governance, leaving a power vacuum that China could step up to fill with less resistance from a Western ally system led by the U.S.

"China could take this opportunity to make more friends or at least reduce rivals and enemies," Wang said.

This is an undertaking that's already underway, the latest example being a meeting in October between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping — the first in five years due to various border disputes. (India may have had its own reasons for the rapprochement.)

"We believe that the India-China relationship is very important, not only for our people but also for global peace, stability and progress," Modi said in October.

### The Taiwan question

According to Lin of The Asia Group, there could be an "atrophy of the alliance system."

With that, China may also have an opportunity to assert its presence in its own sphere of influence,

including in the Pacific, putting the future of Taiwan into question.

Under the "One China" policy, Beijing views Taiwan as part of the country, not an independent state, frequently touting "reunification."

Although it has no formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the U.S. has unofficially maintained ties and commits to its defence.

In 2016, Trump famously drew ire from China after taking a phone call from then-Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen after winning the White House, becoming the first U.S. president (and president-elect) to speak to a Taiwanese leader since the 1970s.

In October, he told the Wall Street Journal that China would not dare provoke the Republican leader because President Xi Jinping knows he is "f--king crazy."

However, on a recent episode of the *Joe Rogan Experience* podcast, Trump mused that Taiwan should pay Washington for its defence and routinely accused it on the campaign trail of stealing the U.S.'s semiconductor industry, threatening soaring tariffs.

Currently, analysts estimate that about 90 per cent of the world's advanced chips are manufactured by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company.

Considering the lack of consistency and the president-elect's previous non-interventionist stance, some say he could lose sight of the island as he focuses on the relationship with Beijing.

"He might forget [about defending Taiwan] completely," the University of Toronto's Ong said. "That will send a very kind of strong signal to China that Taiwan is up for grabs."

This time around, Taiwan was quick to deny that its current president, Lai Ching-te, was going to make a similar phone call, a likely indicator of the fragility of the relationship this time around.

"I don't think Taiwan has a lot of allies around the world aside from the United States, so it's actually fairly weak," Ong said.

At a routine press briefing following Trump's election, officials with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated that "China firmly opposes any form of official interaction between the United States and Taiwan."

"The U.S. government should abide by the One China principle," warned spokesperson Mao Ning.

What the Trump administration's approach will be will also depend on the people he appoints. On Tuesday, Trump said he picked retired Army Green Beret Mike Waltz as national security adviser, a China hawk and prominent critic.

"We still hope that people at the top have some degree of sensibility," said Ong.

#### **How does Canada factor in?**

With Trump in office, Beijing's relationship with Ottawa may be put on the back burner as leaders manage their ties with the U.S.

However, there's another outcome, according to Wang, who said the possibility of a weakened Canada-U.S. relationship and a more uncertain future could lead to China strengthening its ties outside of the Pacific region.

"Canada may also have an increased incentive to look elsewhere in the world," she said.

#### **The Next Dalai Lama: Preparing for Reincarnation and Why It Matters to India**

11 November 2024, [Carnegie India](#), Vijay Gokhale

The aim of this paper is to look beyond the India-China dynamic on the Dalai Lama and Tibet, to how the PRC shapes its approach to the reincarnation question based on its broader domestic and foreign policy. This paper identifies the key questions that might assist policy makers in India to generate appropriate policy to handle the same.

#### **Introduction**

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama is eighty-nine years of age. He has been living in exile since 1959. He assures his followers that he will live for several more years, possibly until he is 113.<sup>1</sup> Since the early 1980s, there have been attempts by the Dalai Lama to reconcile with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Thus far, these efforts have not borne fruit. Although a reconciliation in the future that might permit him to return to Tibet cannot be ruled out, the likelihood of this happening appears to be remote. He could likely pass away in exile. In 2022, he said that he would prefer to die in a free and democratic country like India rather than be surrounded by Chinese officials at the time of his death.<sup>2</sup>

As a Living Buddha, he is expected to reincarnate, but the question of his succession remains shrouded in uncertainty since the current Dalai Lama has forewarned of the possibility that the line might end with him. He has also indicated at various times that he might reincarnate outside Tibet. The PRC, which has ruled Tibet since 1950, says there will be a successor to the 14th Dalai Lama and that the next incarnation will be born inside China and approved by the Chinese government.

The question of who selects the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is debatable. Tibetans reject the idea that China has the authority to exercise legal jurisdiction over the process of selecting the Dalai Lama (and other Living Buddhas of Tibet). The PRC claims that the imperial ordinance of 1793 (known as the Imperially Approved Ordinance for Better Governance of Tibet or the 29-article Ordinance) stipulates the procedure for the reincarnation of the Living Buddhas (including the Dalai Lama) and subjects the selected candidate to approval by Beijing.<sup>3</sup> However, it is a fact that the Golden Urn method of selecting the Dalai Lamas,



stipulated by the 1793 imperial ordinance, was only selectively applied in the cases of the 11th and 12th Dalai Lamas but was dispensed with for the 9th, 13th, and 14th Dalai Lamas.<sup>4</sup>

If the current Dalai Lama chooses to reincarnate, possibly outside the territory of the PRC, and another reincarnation is selected by the PRC, more than one reincarnation of the 15th Dalai Lama could co-exist.<sup>5</sup>

This situation will be monitored with great interest in India, where the Dalai Lama has been residing since 1959. His presence has been a continuing sore point in India's relations with the PRC. After his passing, a sizeable Tibetan community-in-exile will continue on Indian soil. Should the reincarnation either be found in or relocated to India, it might complicate relations in light of China's declaration that the reincarnation must be found with its prior approval within sovereign Chinese territory. One study supposes that the PRC would probably demand the closure of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) as well as Tibetan educational and cultural institutions located in India. The possibility that the PRC will try to split the exile community by infiltrating and influencing Buddhist monasteries and communities in India's Himalayan region will have security implications for India.<sup>6</sup>

The reincarnation question has salience for India. Tibetan Buddhism has a significant Indian following in the Himalayan states, and controversy over the selection of the next Dalai Lama could have domestic reverberations. There is also a significant Tibetan population that has been residing in India—which is the result of the poor handling of Tibetan issues by the PRC—and India has an interest in an orderly transition taking place for Tibet's highest-ranking spiritual leader. Hence, the policy question of how India might handle such a situation, should it arise, is of crucial importance domestically as well as for the future relationship between India and the PRC.

In India, the issue of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation is usually viewed from a bilateral perspective—as either giving India leverage vis-à-vis China or imposing a burden upon it in the context of India–China relations. It presumes that India's posture on the sensitive matter of the reincarnation could be central to the crafting of the PRC's policy in a post-14th Dalai Lama scenario. This approach attributes a passive or reactive role to the PRC. The aim of this paper is to look beyond the India–China dynamics on the Dalai Lama and Tibet and at how the PRC shapes its approach to the reincarnation question based on its broader domestic and foreign policy needs so that India might generate appropriate policy to handle the same.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first part examines how the evolution of Chinese policy toward religion in general, and Tibetan Buddhism in particular, since 1949 is shaping Chinese thinking on the question of the next Dalai Lama. The second part looks at how

external factors, in particular the approach of the United States toward Tibetan Buddhism and the Dalai Lama, has impacted the Chinese policy on Tibet, and how the current state of U.S.–China relations might shape the PRC's approach on the reincarnation issue. The two sections identify domestic and external drivers of Chinese policy on the issue at hand. The third part looks at the history of India–China relations with respect to the Dalai Lama and how both countries have handled the matter. It seeks to draw some broad learnings from the past sixty-five years of interaction between the two countries after the Dalai Lama came to India. The last part of the paper identifies some of the policy questions that India might need to handle in order to shape a coherent and stable policy in a post-14th Dalai Lama scenario.

The paper concludes that the PRC's policy on the Dalai Lama and the reincarnation question is not primarily driven by India's actions or policy. The primary drivers are the overriding domestic requirement of politico-social stability in an ethnically distinct borderland region and the external dynamics of the U.S.–China competition. The PRC has tolerated the Dalai Lama's presence in India so long as it does not impinge on the two critical concerns of social stability and Sino–U.S. competition. A unilateral gesture of goodwill that India might show after the passing of the 14th Dalai Lama, (for example, possibly disallowing the Dalai Lama's chosen successor from living in India or officially acknowledging the PRC's candidate as the successor to the 14th Dalai Lama) is unlikely to change the PRC's policy toward India. The passing of the 14th Dalai Lama will also bring a material change in the India–China–Tibet equation because they might not agree on the next incarnation. This is likely to raise important questions for which India needs to develop policy responses in advance of the event. Given his age and health, critically thinking through these questions ought not to be postponed.

Part I: Religion in China and the Chinese Communist Party

Prior to 1949, religion did not prominently figure in Mao Zedong's conversations and speeches. His priority was to establish communist rule in China, including over the minority regions like Tibet.<sup>7</sup> As Mao put it, the minority regions comprised over half the territory of China; they were resource-rich, and located in the borderlands.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the establishment of Chinese control over Tibet was the priority and not the religious question.

So far as general religious policy was concerned, apart from the fact that religion was antithetical to communism, the newly established PRC took a relatively benign approach. They needed support from all segments of the population and accepted the influence of religion in Chinese society as a reality. In April 1945, Mao Zedong told the 7th National Congress

of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) that, “all religions are permitted in China’s liberated areas in accordance with the principle of freedom of religious belief. All believers in Protestantism, Catholicism, Islamism, Buddhism, and other faiths enjoy the protection of the people’s government so long as they are abiding by its laws.”<sup>9</sup> The CCP’s policy toward religious groups in China was conditioned by two priorities—social stability and national security. In the former case, the party felt that the nexus between entrenched feudal interests and religious groups might be an obstacle to the CCP’s efforts to establish complete control over society. In the latter case, their concern was that foreign domination of religious organizations inside China could become conduits for opposition. In such cases, the party applied restrictions and took action against religious groups. Since the CCP’s priority in Tibet was to gain political control, plans were made to attack Tibet immediately after the establishment of the PRC in 1949.<sup>10</sup> Mao personally approved these plans.<sup>11</sup> Following the People’s Liberation Army’s invasion in October 1950, the Tibetan government was compelled to negotiate the Agreement of the Central People’s Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (known as the Seventeen-Point Agreement). It brought the Tibetan people into the “big family of the motherland—The People’s Republic of China,” and accorded autonomous status to Tibet but only as a “local government” under the leadership of the central authority in Beijing.<sup>12</sup> The CCP did not trust the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist clergy but was conscious that their hold over Tibet was tenuous and that they lacked the material means to administer complete control over Tibet. They needed to consolidate before tackling the Dalai Lama. In April 1952, an inner-party directive was sent by the party’s central committee to the southwest bureau (in charge of Tibet), which acknowledged that, “while they [the Dalai Lama’s government] are inferior to us in military strength, they have an advantage over us in social influence. We should . . . put off the full implementation of the agreement.” The priority was to “take proper steps to win over the Dalai and the majority of his top echelon . . . in order to achieve a gradual, bloodless transformation of the Tibetan economic and political system over a number of years.”<sup>13</sup> There was no direct move to interfere with Tibetan Buddhism, although they began to undermine the Dalai Lama’s influence in other ways.<sup>14</sup> The soft approach taken by the PRC in the early 1950s is reflected in the Dalai Lama’s statement that Mao was a fatherly figure with whom he had good relations.<sup>15</sup> By the late 1950s, the PRC had grown more confident about its position inside Tibet and had begun tightening its control over Tibetan society. After

the Dalai Lama left Tibet in 1959, the PRC introduced repressive policies. In the wake of the Dalai Lama’s flight, Mao’s government confiscated estates belonging to the religious elites and closed down many monasteries. The destruction of monasteries, imprisonment of monks, and banning of worship during the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) is well-documented. It was similar to their approach toward other organized religions inside China (Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, and Taoism). Thus, religious policy in general during Mao Zedong’s period, as well as more specifically in Tibet, was guided by priorities of domestic political stability and national security rather than Marxist dogma. These remain the fundamental pillars of the PRC’s subsequent religion policy.

After Mao’s passing, the PRC’s religious policy entered its second phase. In March 1982, the party’s central committee formally acknowledged the harsh religious repression and enormous destruction of places of worship in China during the Cultural Revolution. It passed a landmark resolution titled “The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question during Our Country’s Socialist Period.”<sup>16</sup> Commonly known as Document 19, this became the new guideline for all religious policy, including that toward Tibetan Buddhism, under Deng Xiaoping. Document 19 acknowledged the existence of religion inside the PRC, its mass nature, and its entanglement with the ethnic question in the borderlands.<sup>17</sup> It posited a basic question that became the determinant of the PRC’s revised religious policy, namely “can we handle this religious question properly as we work towards national stability and ethnic unity, as we develop our international relations while resisting the infiltration of hostile forces from abroad?”<sup>18</sup> While acknowledging both the domestic (social stability) and international (national security) dimensions, as Mao had done, Deng reoriented religious policy to meet the requirements of the new policy of reform and opening up to the outside world.

The PRC permitted the revival of religious activity by recognized religious groups but set clear limits within which such a revival could proceed. Freedom of religious belief was given constitutional protection in 1982 (Chapter II, Article 36 of the PRC Constitution).<sup>19</sup> But religious establishments were not permitted to repossess their feudal privileges and use religious pretexts to oppose the Communist Party’s leadership, nor to destroy national or ethnic unity. Within the rubric of this broad religious policy, the PRC also began its reengagement with the Dalai Lama. In 1979, with Deng’s approval, the PRC reestablished contact through his brother Gyalo Thondup.<sup>20</sup> Beijing believed that the Dalai Lama’s return to Tibet would confirm China’s sovereign claim to the region. Thondup led the team of the Dalai Lama’s

representatives for two exploratory talks (in 1982 and 1984). It did not lead to a wider dialogue between the PRC and the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama subsequently built pressure by internationalizing the Tibet question in his speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg in June 1988 and, in turn, the PRC labeled the Dalai Lama as a “splittist.” But the PRC’s policy toward Tibetan Buddhism broadly remained in line with the overall religious policy.<sup>21</sup> In fact, from the 1980s onward, Chinese strategy gave priority to economically integrating Tibet with the rest of China so that it might reduce the role of religion and the Dalai Lama in the minds of the Tibetan people over time.

Through the 1990s, as a substantial religious revival began in China, regulations were introduced to manage religious affairs, beginning with the party’s central committee’s Document No. 6 in 1991, increasing regulatory control over religious activity. In 1994, under the Regulations on Managing Religious Activities of the State Council (known as Document No. 144), it was made mandatory for religious organizations to register with local governments and to certify that they were free from foreign controls. In 1995, fifteen religious groups (including the Fa Lun Gong) were labelled as “evil cults” and banned.<sup>22</sup> In 1997, the State Council issued a white paper on freedom of religious belief in China, which said that religions must conduct activities within the sphere of the law. Despite tighter regulations, a tolerant perspective was adopted toward the organized religions so long as they operated under the leadership of the State Religious Affairs Bureau and the patriotic religious organizations approved by Beijing. At the National Conference on Religious Affairs in December 2001, general secretary Jiang Zemin called for greater “guidance” to religion but also reminded officials to adhere to the party’s basic line on religious policy and not to use administrative measures to eliminate religion in China.<sup>23</sup> This relatively benign approach to religion was reflected in the party’s handling of Tibetan Buddhism. During Jiang Zemin’s term as president, informal contact was resumed with the Dalai Lama’s representative, which would lead to the establishment of a formal dialogue from September 2002 onward between the party’s United Front Work Department (UFWD) and the Dalai Lama’s chief representative, Lodi Gyari.<sup>24</sup>

China’s overall religious policy entered a transition phase under Jiang’s successor, Hu Jintao. The first signs of the tightening of religious freedoms appeared in 2004 when the State Council passed Decree No. 426 (known as Document No. 6) titled “The Regulations on Religious Affairs.”<sup>25</sup> These regulations decreed that religion in China shall not be used to undermine the country’s social order (Article 3), stipulated enhanced measures for the establishment of new religious institutions, and more strictly regulated the conduct of

religious activities (Articles 8 and 12), and made it mandatory for religious clergy to have prior recognition from the state authorities (Article 29). The new regulations did not prohibit external contact but said that these should be nonconditional.<sup>26</sup> For Tibetan Buddhism, the 2004 regulations were also significant because, for the first time, it introduced stipulations on the selection of high-ranking Tibetan lamas. Article 27 of Document No. 6 stated: “The inheritance and succession of the Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism shall be handled in accordance with religious rituals and historical customs under the guidance of Buddhist groups and reported to the religious affairs department of the people’s government.”<sup>27</sup> This was the first sign that the central leadership was focusing on the reincarnation of ranking lamas of Tibetan Buddhism. While the 2004 regulations did not stipulate any specific procedures for the state to control the process of the selection of Living Buddhas, Article 27 laid the basis for a subsequent set of specific rules on their selection.

In 2007, the State Religious Affairs Bureau issued Order No. 5 titled “Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism,” which made it clear that the central government intended to control the entire process of selection and appointment of Living Buddhas.<sup>28</sup> The regulations specified that only registered monasteries in Tibet could apply for Living Buddha reincarnations (Article 3). No group or individual could carry out any activity related to the search or recognition of a reincarnation without authorization from state authorities (Article 7). Any person or group that initiated a search for Living Buddha candidates without prior authorization would be deemed as committing a criminal offense that warranted harsh punishment (Article 11). Furthermore, it was explicitly stated that Living Buddhas with a “particularly great impact” (*you tebie zhongda yingxiangde*)—such as the Dalai Lama—could only be approved by the highest state organ of the PRC (Articles 5 and 9).<sup>29</sup> From September 1, 2007, the process of reincarnation of all Living Buddhas has been under the complete control of the Chinese central government.

The lack of progress in reconciliation between the Dalai Lama and the PRC is one factor that would explain the party’s decision to enact specific regulations on Living Buddha reincarnations. According to Lodi Gyari, the Dalai Lama’s main negotiator for nine rounds of talks from 2002 until 2010, both sides appeared satisfied until the fourth round of talks in July 2005, after which the Dalai Lama’s representatives saw a hardening of the Chinese position along with a sustained propaganda campaign against him. This hardening coincided with a period of tense rioting that erupted in Tibet in 2008.<sup>30</sup> All this made it less likely that the Dalai Lama would agree to

Chinese terms. The tapering off of Chinese hopes about securing a favorable resolution to the Tibetan question through talks, coupled with the Dalai Lama's advancing age, appears to have triggered the change in policy. Perhaps Chinese leaders kept in mind the controversy that had erupted in the early 1990s over the selection of the 11th Panchen Lama and wished to preempt it when it was time to find the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.<sup>31</sup>

Since 2013, China's current leader, President Xi Jinping, has overseen the further tightening of controls over all religious activity in China. This is part of his broader plan to restore the party's authority and to prevent inimical forces from injecting ideas that are detrimental to the party's dominance. The Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere (also known as Document No. 9), issued in early 2013, has specifically identified "the use of ethnic and religious issues to divide and breakup" China as a challenge to the party's long-term dominance.<sup>32</sup> Xi has taken steps to deal with it. In May 2015, he convened a United Front Work Conference where he publicly called for the "Sinicization" of religions in China, a call that was repeated at the National Religious Work Conference in April 2016.<sup>33</sup> Xi announced that this process would be managed through laws.<sup>34</sup> Wang Zu'o'an, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, said that religions in China needed to be guided towards this process of "localization."<sup>35</sup> A slew of legislative and regulatory provisions followed.

In February 2018, the State Council made it mandatory for all religious organizations, instructors, and colleges to register with the state authority and to seek prior permission before establishing religious colleges and conducting teachings and other religious activities at public venues.<sup>36</sup> In February 2020, further regulations titled Measures for the Administration of Religious Groups stipulated that all religious organizations "must follow the leadership of the CCP" (Article 5) rather than simply supporting the CCP leadership as stipulated in the 2018 regulations. It became mandatory for all religious groups to accept the supervision, oversight, and administration of local and central governments (Article 6); to publicize the party's directives and policies and to educate and guide believers toward supporting the party's leadership (Article 17); and to establish study systems for this purpose (Article 25).

Each subsequent regulation since 2020 has progressively tightened the scope of religious activity inside China and built pressure on religions to sinicize. These regulations include a prohibition on the distribution of unauthorized domestically generated online religious content without the state's approval (Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services, March 2021), empowering the

state to exercise closer financial supervision over religious institutions (Measures on Financial Management of Venues for Religious Activities, June 2021), and making it mandatory for all religious venues to study Xi Jinping thought (Measures for the Management of Religious Activity Venues, September 2023).<sup>37</sup> The steady advancement of state and party control over all religious activity inside China is also evident in the language of the legislation, which has evolved from "guiding" religious groups in order to support CCP leadership in the 2018 regulations, to the more authoritative "must follow" the CCP leadership in the 2020 regulations, and the definitive "must uphold" (not simply follow) the CCP leadership and sinicize religion in the latest (2023) regulations. They reflect growing concerns within the party leadership that religious activity inside China might prove to be a politically destabilizing force that requires to be reined in since maintaining political and social stability at all costs is the overriding consideration for the Communist Party of China.

In the case of Tibet, concerns over the potentially destabilizing role of Tibetan Buddhism are magnified by the separate ethnic identity of the Tibetans and their geographical location in the borderland. At the Seventh Tibet Work Forum in 2020, Xi made it clear that Chinese policy in Tibet will continue to be based primarily on maintaining security and political stability.<sup>38</sup> This means tighter supervision over Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>39</sup> Since 2011, permanent teams of party cadres have been assigned to all Tibetan monasteries. After 2018, a systematic program to make monks and nuns "politically reliable" is underway.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the overriding concern of ensuring domestic stability that has guided the PRC's overall religious policy is reflected in its treatment of Tibetan Buddhism. In Tibet, ethnic and geographical factors have accentuated the Chinese concerns. The fear that Tibetan irredentism or separatism might be used by external enemies has shaped Chinese policy since the beginning and, as we shall see in the next part, from early on, the PRC has worked its policy to eliminate such a possibility.

The PRC's perception of Tibetan Buddhism from the prism of its domestic stability concerns is a critical (but not the sole) determinant in shaping policy on the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

Part II: The United States, China, and Tibetan Buddhism

Aside from domestic concerns over the undermining of social stability by the established religions in China, the influence of external forces on religions inside the region is also a general concern for the Communist Party. It maintains that Western religions like Catholicism and Protestantism in particular "had long been controlled and utilized by colonialists and imperialists."<sup>41</sup> In 1949, the PRC deported Western

missionaries and created “patriotic” religious associations to manage the religious question under direct state supervision.<sup>42</sup>

So far as Tibet was concerned, the ethnic identity gave an edge to the PRC’s concerns about the manipulation of Tibetan Buddhism by external forces in order to separate Tibet from China. In the CCP’s opinion, the British had encouraged a distinct and separate Tibetan identity after 1911, by acknowledging Chinese “suzerainty” but not “sovereignty” over Tibet and dealing directly with the Dalai Lama’s government.<sup>43</sup> The PRC felt that even after Britain’s withdrawal from India, the United States continued to pursue efforts to separate Tibet from China by championing the cause of “Tibet independence.”<sup>44</sup> Hence, an examination of U.S. policy and its impact in shaping the PRC’s attitude toward the Dalai Lama is important.

The United States has had a checkered policy with respect to Tibet. During World War II, the U.S. government disagreed with the British on Tibet’s status. In its memorandum to the British government in July 1942, the United States opined that “for the most part the government of the United States has borne in mind the fact that the Chinese government has long claimed suzerainty over Tibet and that the Chinese constitution lists Tibet among areas constituting the territory of the Republic of China. This government has at no time raised a question regarding either of these claims.”<sup>45</sup> The United States did not agree with the Dalai Lama’s request in 1949 for support to the idea of an independent Tibet either.<sup>46</sup> By the early 1950s, American policy had changed because of the Korean War. The United States wanted the Dalai Lama to disavow the Seventeen-Point Agreement (1951) and flee into exile, and said that it would recognize him as the “head of an autonomous Tibet.”<sup>47</sup> The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency financed the Khampa rebellion in eastern Tibet during the mid-fifties. The rebellion failed, but the United States took an important step towards recognizing Tibet’s special status when, after 1959, letters delivered to the Dalai Lama explicitly stated the willingness of the U.S. government “to make a public declaration of its support for the principle of self-determination for the Tibetan people.”<sup>48</sup>

Tibet became marginal to American interests after the U.S.-China rapprochement. When the Dalai Lama wished to visit the United States in 1970, Henry Kissinger, the national security adviser to president Richard Nixon, said that “too close an identification with Tibetan separatist aspirations would rank with our Taiwan policy as key roadblocks to any improvement of relations with communist China.”<sup>49</sup> The Nixon administration adopted a hands-off approach that was to continue through subsequent administrations until the early 1990s.

The United States Congress became involved in the Tibetan Buddhist cause from the late 1980s. After the end of the Cold War, Bill Clinton became the first U.S. president to officially receive the Dalai Lama in the White House.<sup>50</sup> Clinton raised the issue of religious freedoms in China, including for Tibetan Buddhism, with China’s president Jiang Zemin. In October 1997, president Jiang Zemin told a press conference in Washington that all Chinese citizens had freedom of religious belief.<sup>51</sup> In June 1998, in his second press appearance with Clinton in Beijing, Jiang explicitly said that Chinese constitutional provisions on freedom of religious belief also extended to Tibet. “As long as the Dalai Lama can publicly make a statement and a commitment that Tibet is an inalienable part of China,” said Jiang, “the door to dialogue and negotiation is open. Actually, we are having several channels of communication with the Dalai Lama.”<sup>52</sup> He also publicly confirmed that confidential contacts had resumed between the Dalai Lama’s representatives and the party’s United Front Work Department (UFWD).<sup>53</sup> During the second Clinton administration, a new position of special coordinator for Tibetan affairs was created within the State Department. In 2000, the newly established Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) was mandated to maintain regular scrutiny of China’s human rights record and to cooperate with the special coordinator for Tibet in these matters.<sup>54</sup> It signaled the return of a proactive American phase on the Tibet question.

In 2002, the U.S. Congress passed the Tibetan Policy Act (TPA). This was, as Lodi Gyari put it, “not simply a resolution expressing the sense of Congress but rather a binding law requiring action on behalf of the U.S. government.”<sup>55</sup> It was the core legislative measure guiding the U.S. policy on Tibet. It institutionalized the Office of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Affairs, officially encouraged the Chinese government to hold a dialogue with the Dalai Lama, and provided financial support for the preservation of the Tibetan identity. Since the passage of the TPA in 2002, Tibet has been on the political agenda. Congress enacted the second piece of Tibet legislation, known as the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA), that president Donald Trump signed into law in December 2020. The TPSA specifically endorsed the right of the Tibetans to select, educate, and venerate their own religious leaders in accordance with their established religious practices and system. It called on the PRC to respect the reincarnation system of Tibetan Buddhism. The act also stated that the PRC’s interference in the process of reincarnation was a “clear violation of the fundamental religious freedoms of Tibetan Buddhists and the Tibetan people,” and asked the U.S. government to take “all appropriate measures to hold accountable senior officials of the government of the PRC or the Chinese Communist Party who directly



interfere with the identification and installation of the 15<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.”<sup>56</sup> The special coordinator was mandated to pursue the building of international coalitions to oppose the PRC’s efforts to select Tibetan Living Buddhas and to ensure that the future Dalai Lama is determined solely within the Tibetan Buddhist community. In short, the TPSA 2020 directly took a stand that is contrary to the PRC’s on the question of the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation.

In July 2024, the third and most recent piece of legislation was signed into law by President Joe Biden. The Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet–China Dispute Act (known as the Resolve Tibet Act) authorizes funds for countering Chinese disinformation about the Dalai Lama and urges the PRC to engage in meaningful and direct dialogue with him without preconditions. It reiterates the mandate given to the special coordinator in the TPSA 2020 to “coordinate with other governments in multilateral efforts toward this goal.”<sup>57</sup> The act is also significant because it states that “the U.S. government has never taken the position that Tibet was a part of China since ancient times,” and challenges the statutory definition of Tibet by the PRC as limited to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). The Resolve Tibet Act, defines Tibet as the TAR, as well as other Tibetan areas in Chinese provinces (Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan).<sup>58</sup>

These three pieces of American legislation on Tibet since 2002 raise doubts about the historical Chinese claims to Tibet, challenge the PRC’s claim to having locus standi on the future Dalai Lama’s selection and enthronement, and internationalize the Tibet issue by mandating the special coordinator to counter Chinese propaganda and coordinate with foreign governments on pressing the Chinese to have an unconditional dialogue with the Dalai Lama. China has categorically rejected all three pieces of legislation and refused to recognize the special coordinator.<sup>59</sup> China’s foreign ministry said that the TPSA 2020 severely violates the norms governing international relations and is an attempt to interfere in China’s domestic affairs.<sup>60</sup> In response to the Resolve Tibet Act of 2024, the PRC has said that China’s internal affairs “brook no interference by any external forces” and that “no one and no force should ever attempt to destabilize Xizang [Tibet] to contain and suppress China.”<sup>61</sup>

Although the passage of the TPA in 2002 took place when Sino-U.S. relations were in a better shape than they currently are, its significance was not lost on China. It revived concerns about the United States’ intentions with respect to Tibet. In the subsequent raft of domestic legislation on religious policy enacted by the PRC from 2004 onward (detailed in the first part of this paper), the theme of foreign interference and the PRC’s determination to restrict it are palpable.

Article 4 of the 2004 Chinese legislation explicitly states that religious affairs shall not be dominated by foreign forces.<sup>62</sup> Article 2 of the 2007 regulations reiterates this point specifically on the question of the selection of Living Buddhas of Tibet. It states that “reincarnating Buddhas shall not be interfered with or be under the domination of any foreign organization or individual.”<sup>63</sup> The PRC’s efforts to insulate the process from foreign interference have accelerated since President Xi Jinping assumed office in 2013.

Xi called for the “sinocization” of all religions in China at the National Conference on Religious Work (the first to be held after 2001) in April 2016. In this context, he explicitly stated that “we must resolutely guard against overseas infiltration via religious means.”<sup>64</sup> Wang Zuo’an, director of the State Administration for Religious Affairs, has since elaborated on this theme by claiming that the West is using religion to infiltrate the PRC with the objective of changing its political system.<sup>65</sup> Under Xi, the fresh regulations are aimed at eliminating any possibility for foreign involvement in China’s religious affairs. Since 2018, foreigners have been prohibited from establishing religious organizations, setting up religious institutions or sites, recruiting Chinese followers, and engaging in missionary activities inside the PRC.<sup>66</sup> Since 2021, there has been a ban on overseas organizations or individuals from operating online religious services without prior Chinese approval.<sup>67</sup> The Law on Administration of Activities of Overseas NGOs within China also prohibits overseas NGOs from engaging in or sponsoring any religious activities inside China.

These new regulations are stringently applied in Tibet where, aside from limiting the role of foreigners, the state has severely curtailed foreign travel by Tibetans to attend the Dalai Lama’s teachings abroad and pressured the government of Nepal to close its borders to devotees and refugees from Tibet. Strict laws have criminalized self-immolations and those abetting such practices because of the adverse international attention that such acts have attracted in the recent past. Officials have been placed in monasteries for supervision and the “patriotic re-education” of monks and nuns.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, the PRC has tightened its grip on the identification and selection process for Living Buddhas. According to a Chinese source, by the end of 2022, ninety-three newly incarnated Living Buddhas have been found inside and approved and recognized by the PRC.<sup>69</sup> Lastly, despite international appeals and the American legislation, President Xi Jinping has not renewed talks with the Dalai Lama.

Thus, the actions of both the PRC and the United States on the Dalai Lama reincarnation question since the beginning of the twenty-first century have made it a significant friction point in their relationship. China’s concerns over American objectives in Tibet and the

public support in the United States and the West for the Tibetan cause are strong drivers of the PRC's policy on the reincarnation question. It is leading to the securitization of the reincarnation, becoming a part of the larger Sino-U.S. competition. It is thus clear that Beijing's worries over the effectiveness of its control on Tibet and their concerns over American objectives are shaping a hard-line policy on Tibet and the Dalai Lama. This will have important implications for India too.

### Part III: A Short Account of Indian and Chinese Approaches to the Dalai Lama

Although India and Tibet had several centuries of spiritual and cultural contact, modern political relations began with the British rule over India. The British interest in Tibet grew from the concern that at the end of the nineteenth century, the Russian Empire was seeking to expand into Southern Asia. The determination of the frontier was crucial to halt the Russian advance north of the great Himalayan range. The matter was complicated by the dynamics between China and Tibet—the Chinese claimed sovereignty over Tibet, and the Tibetans claimed that Tibet had never been a part of China. The British sidestepped the question of Tibet's status by acknowledging Chinese "suzerainty" but not "sovereignty" over Tibet and finalized the Indo-Tibetan frontier as per the traditional and customary line that lay along the highest Himalayan watershed, with the 13th Dalai Lama's government in 1914.<sup>70</sup>

After independence in 1947, the government of India maintained its ties to the Dalai Lama's government. In 1949, India's dilemma, contained in a note from the prime minister, was one of how to "maintain and continue our friendly relations with the Tibetan government" without "taking any measure which might be considered a challenge to the Chinese communist government."<sup>71</sup> India's primary interest was to ensure that the boundary remained unchanged, less so with regard to the survivability of the Dalai Lama's government.<sup>72</sup> This remained the primary Indian objective in Tibet after the Chinese takeover in 1950. The Dalai Lama became a factor in India's policy only much later when he fled into exile. In contrast, China's primary objective was to seize control over Tibet. They were concerned about Western interference. India, by virtue of its close relationship with the UK, was viewed with suspicion—because not only did the Chinese think that India might interfere, but they also felt that India might be pressured to allow its territory to be used by the West to frustrate the PRC's objective of fully controlling Tibet. At critical times in the 1950s, when their concerns grew over Western interference in Tibetan affairs, Chinese officials and media accused the government of India "as having been affected by foreign influences hostile to China in Tibet," or alleging

that India was providing behind-the-scenes support to the West in fomenting the trouble in 1959.<sup>73</sup>

It is worth noting that although the PRC brooked no interference from any foreign power in Tibet, it would ask India from time to time to intervene with the Dalai Lama when this aligned with the PRC's own priorities. In March 1951, former Chinese premier Zhou Enlai personally sought Indian assistance in dissuading the Dalai Lama from leaving Tibet during the negotiations on the Seventeen-Point Agreement.<sup>74</sup> In 1956, when the Dalai Lama was reluctant to return to Tibet (he had come to India to attend the 2500th anniversary celebrations of the birth of the Lord Buddha), premier Zhou directly requested India's prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru to persuade him to return, adding that, "as long as the Dalai Lama is away [from Tibet] something might happen. . . . This is chiefly instigated by the United States and Taiwan."<sup>75</sup>

Three broad conclusions might be drawn from this recounting of the early history of India-China exchanges on Tibet and the Dalai Lama.

First, from the very beginning, India and China had different objectives in Tibet. Complete control over the Dalai Lama's government and Tibetan society, which were Chinese priorities, was not India's primary concern. For India, its relationship with the Dalai Lama was about ensuring the finality and inviolability of its boundary.

Second, the PRC acknowledged Indian influence on the Dalai Lama. Hence, they sought India's help or involvement when required. At such times, the PRC expected India to assist unconditionally, but it would not reciprocally permit India any relationship with the Dalai Lama on matters of interest to India. In other words, China used the doctrine of "non-interference in internal affairs" selectively.

Third, since the PRC was primarily concerned about American efforts to frustrate their objectives in Tibet, their policy was to neutralize India so that Indian territory was not available to the West to subvert China in Tibet. They soft-pedaled the border issue until they had marginalized India's influence by ending extraterritorial privileges in 1954. In the late 1950s, after the CIA commenced operations inside Tibet, the PRC brought pressure on India to dissociate from such efforts but without directly accusing India of interference (until the Dalai Lama arrived in India), although the Chinese leadership distrusted the government of India's motives in Tibet.

The PRC has continued to follow this pattern in dealing with India on matters relating to the Dalai Lama in certain ways. First, it focuses on securing reaffirmations from India about Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, thus reducing the scope for ambiguity.<sup>76</sup> Second, it accepts the Dalai Lama's presence in India and tolerates the so-called Tibetan government-in-exile (Central Tibetan Administration

or the CTA) in return for regular Indian assurances that it does not recognize the CTA or permit the Dalai Lama to engage in anti-China political activity from Indian soil.<sup>77</sup> Third, it seeks to deny the use of Indian soil to the United States for the purpose of subverting the PRC's sovereignty in Tibet. China is also careful not to "provoke" India by accusing it of being a part of the Western "plot" to promote Tibetan "independence." The white paper on Tibet issued by China's State Council in May 2021, for example, does not allege Indian involvement with the United States in efforts to support the Khampa rebellion in the 1950s, nor about India's alleged involvement in the 1959 uprising in Tibet.<sup>78</sup> The official PRC statements are cautious, confining themselves to expressing the hope that India will abide by its assurances of not letting the Dalai Lama engage in political activity or denying the use of its territory to China's adversaries. They also remain mostly silent or make pro forma protests when Indian leaders meet the Dalai Lama.

The PRC does not want to trigger active Indian support to the activities of the Tibetan exile community living in India or create scope for "anti-Chinese western forces" to subvert the PRC's territorial integrity from Indian soil. The Chinese leadership has designed its policy toward India with these objectives in mind.

For its part, India is publicly circumspect in its dealings with the Dalai Lama, but it has not allowed the PRC to stop its support toward preserving the Tibetan way of life or circumscribing the spiritual and religious activities of the Dalai Lama. India's policy is that he is a revered religious leader and is accorded freedom to carry out his religious activities in India.<sup>79</sup> From time to time, India's leadership also receives the Dalai Lama as a spiritual leader and exchanges greetings on special occasions. It permits foreign disciples to attend his teachings and to seek his blessings. It does not prevent visits by foreign government or legislative representatives, but it also does not associate with or endorse them.

India has not taken a public stand so far on the question of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation. It has, however, demonstrated that it is not willing to unconditionally accept the PRC's-anointed Living Buddhas (as in the case of Ugyen Thinley Dorje, the so-called 17th Karmapa Lama). It permits alternative Living Buddha candidates to stay and pursue their claim from India. It also continues to permit the entry of Tibetan refugees, supports Tibetan educational and cultural institutions, and allows the exile community to practice Tibetan Buddhism in whatever manner they choose. The Tibetan community has been able to live, practice, and nurture their culture and civilization unhindered in India for more than sixty years.

India does not formally acknowledge the CTA or the Tibetan parliament-in-exile, but it does not interfere with their lawful activity. It has not taken a position on

their demands for self-determination. Nor has India called upon either party to hold dialogue to resolve the matter. Overall, India has sufficiently managed the difficult situation of providing asylum to the Dalai Lama and sustenance to the Tibetan exile community. India's policy has been tolerated by the PRC because it aligns with their own objectives.

As the 14th Dalai Lama ages, the question of what happens after he passes is becoming more pressing. Although China has labeled him a "splittist," he is recognized by both parties as the legitimate Dalai Lama and, thus, India and China are in agreement on this basic point. If more than one incarnation of the 15th Dalai Lama emerges and there is a disagreement between India and China on the next incarnation, the question of whether the PRC will see the presence of an alternative to the Chinese candidate living on Indian soil as a subversive action on India's part could have a bearing on their policy toward India. This would depend on what sort of threat the 15th Dalai Lama candidate poses to the PRC's control of Tibet as well as the state of Sino-U.S. ties. Although India's approach and behavior is not the primary driver of Chinese policy on Tibet and the Dalai Lama, its stance on the selection of the next Dalai Lama will also be a factor in China's handling of the reincarnation question. The activities of the Tibetan community in exile, including the CTA and Tibetan parliament in the post-14th Dalai Lama scenario, are also likely to have policy implications for India. The international response may also influence the policies of both countries. Hence, an exploration of options that India might need to ponder is relevant.

#### Part IV: The Available Options

In India, the Dalai Lama question is garnering public interest. In June 2024, the *Times of India*, a mainstream newspaper, published an op-ed asking India to prepare for a post-Dalai Lama scenario. The piece advocated for a robust Tibet policy as leverage against China at a sensitive time of transition in the highest echelon of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>80</sup> Such views are also reflected in the works of scholars who think that the PRC's arrangements to control the succession process once the 14th Dalai Lama passes and its acceptability to the people in Tibet appear dubious.<sup>81</sup> There have been suggestions that India ought to take a clear position on the succession question. This is also the demand of the Tibetan exile community. Stagnating relations between India and China after 2020 because of the latter's military activity in eastern Ladakh have impacted the public discourse on India's Tibet policy. The passage of the Resolve Tibet Act 2024 as well as, more generally, greater criticism of China's human rights record are amplifying international concerns over the succession question.

Given the domestic stability and national security sensibilities of the Chinese Communist Party and the PRC on the matter of the Dalai Lama's succession, any unilateral gesture or goodwill that India makes toward the PRC with regard to the Dalai Lama on the assumption that China might view it positively is not likely to resonate in Beijing and should therefore be avoided. The PRC distrusts India's motives but tolerates its current policy in pursuit of larger stability and security goals. Their approach with India on the Tibet issue is unidirectional—India must be sensitive to Chinese concerns, but China need not show reciprocal sensitivity to India's concerns relating to Tibet. Hence, any unilateral step that seeks to please China should not be pursued as it will not result in any benefit for India.

Neither should India take an entirely hands-off approach to the reincarnation question, which has salience for India. Tibetan Buddhism has a significant Indian following, and controversy over the selection of the next Dalai Lama could have domestic reverberations. There is also a significant resident Tibetan population since 1959, which is the result of the poor handling of Tibetan issues by the PRC, and India has an interest in an orderly transition in Tibet's highest-ranking spiritual leader.

There are some topics on which the government of India might think through policy options during the lifetime of the 14th Dalai Lama.

First, should India opine on the issue of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation and, more generally, on the right of the Tibetan Buddhist community to select its spiritual leaders without state interference? Thus far, India has avoided this topic. However, if the 14th Dalai Lama decides he will reincarnate, this process could begin in India.<sup>82</sup> The PRC is bound to protest, and the international community is likely to welcome it. By both convention and practice, the Indian state does not interfere in the selection of leaders of any faith in India. Tibetan Buddhism is also a faith that is practiced by communities in some of the northern Indian states. A statement from the government of India, at the appropriate time, about permitting the Tibetan Buddhist community to select its own religious leaders freely and without interference is sustainable as per both the constitution and practice. Going into the details of the selection processes as called for by the Tibetan community by, for example, endorsing the 14th Dalai Lama's statement of September 24, 2011, on reincarnation processes is neither necessary nor desirable.<sup>83</sup>

Second, should India lend its public support to the demand for dialogue between the PRC and the Dalai Lama? The Indian government has not publicly articulated support for the Dalai Lama's call for dialogue with the PRC. However, the PRC, from time to time, publicly calls upon India to have a dialogue to

resolve the Jammu and Kashmir issue, even when India makes it clear that this is an internal matter on which China has no *locus standi*. Given the growing demand from the international community for dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama, India ought to consider articulating its support for these demands. It could be argued that the presence of a large Tibetan exile community in India for more than six decades (as a result of the current Chinese policy in Tibet) gives India *locus standi* in the future of Tibet. It is not necessary that this should be done jointly with others. Although it is extremely unlikely that the PRC will heed India's appeal for dialogue, such articulation will be in line with the current policy of the three mutuals articulated by India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar in 2022—mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest.<sup>84</sup>

Third, should India support the demand of the Tibetan community-in-exile for the right to self-determination? India has not supported these demands in the past. China does not show the same sensitivity toward India's concerns in Jammu & Kashmir. It regularly urges India to resolve the matter in accordance with the will of the people of Kashmir. India might consider using identical or similar language in the future when the occasion arises. This is both different from supporting the demand for self-determination and adequately nuanced to make the point that principles that China claims to espouse in its foreign policy should also be applied to its domestic policy.

Fourth, should India agree to a site or a shrine in India for the final resting place of the mortal remains of the 14th Dalai Lama? Should the 14th Dalai Lama pass away on Indian soil, this might become inevitable. If that happens, the 14th Dalai Lama will be the first Dalai Lama since circa 1706 to be buried outside the Potala Palace in Lhasa.<sup>85</sup> Should the Dalai Lama pass away in India, the government may have no choice in the matter of where his mortal remains should rest. Working on this presumption, the government of India might wish to identify potential resting sites for his mortal remains well in advance, bearing in mind that the place of interment of the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's mortal remains will automatically become a holy shrine for millions of pilgrims. Hence, potential locations, accessibility for pilgrims, and the social and security considerations need to be carefully thought out. Since the PRC still claims that the Dalai Lama is a citizen of the PRC, albeit a renegade, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that it might demand his mortal remains for interment in Lhasa. The government of India would need to develop an appropriate policy response, including potential recourse to legal means, to deal with such demands from the PRC.

Fifth, in what manner will the government of India handle the interregnum between the passing away of

the 14th Dalai Lama and the identification of the 15th one? This period could last several months. The government of India needs to frame appropriate policy responses as to the terms of its engagement with the CTA and the Tibetan parliament located in India during this time as the expulsion of the Tibetan community is not an option available to India. Such contacts are important because the presence and activities of the exile community have domestic, social, and law and order implications. Since mechanisms are already in place for this purpose, there is no need to either formally recognize the CTA or formalize the interaction through the appointment of a coordinator, as suggested in one study.<sup>86</sup> India should continue to support the cultural, educational, and spiritual activities of the Tibetan community in the future.

The related question of how India deals with elements in the Tibetan exile community that wish to change the strategy and tactics of “resistance,” without the guiding hand of the 14th Dalai Lama (who has called for a peaceful resolution of the Tibet–China issue), is also worth pondering. This situation might come to pass if, as one study has suggested, the PRC selects a Living Buddha incarnation from the Shugden sect (with which the 14th Dalai Lama has serious differences) as the 15th Dalai Lama.<sup>87</sup> In the eventuality of such an occurrence, there might be potential for acts of violence within the Tibetan exile community, with consequent law and order problems for India. In both constitutional and legal terms, so long as the exile community does not engage in acts that are contrary to India’s national security (including domestic law and order), there should be no hesitation in permitting the community and its institutions to continue operating from Indian soil. Any sort of violent behavior within the Tibetan community or the threat to use violence against the PRC from Indian soil cannot be tolerated. Equally, neither should India brook any interference by the PRC or its agents like the United Front Work Department in the affairs of the Tibetan community in India. Efforts by Chinese agencies to interfere in any manner should be firmly dealt with under domestic laws, and relevant legal clauses that may be applied should be identified in advance for such purposes.

Sixth, the idea that India should coordinate with like-minded states on the post–14th Dalai Lama situation requires a careful cost-benefit analysis.<sup>88</sup> The U.S. Congress has already mandated the administration to build multilateral momentum on countering the PRC’s narrative and claims. Suggestions for joint initiatives to create a global coalition on the reincarnation question may need to be studied carefully from an Indian perspective, keeping in consideration the implications for the country. International opinion will undoubtedly have domestic reverberations and should be respected, but it is also important that third parties

should not be permitted to take undue advantage of the tentativeness of the situation to engage in activities that might exacerbate the tension between India and the PRC.

Seventh, the 14th Dalai Lama has already said that if he reincarnates, it will be in a “free” country. In 2011, the Dalai Lama explicitly said that “no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the PRC.” This raises the following questions for which appropriate policy would need to be identified.

(a) If the 15th Dalai Lama candidate is found in a third country, how would India respond to an explicit demand from the PRC that the former does not, officially or unofficially, recognize him as the legitimate Dalai Lama?

(b) Even if the government of India does not take an explicit position on the candidate who is found abroad, would it permit him to enter the country? How will India deal with the Chinese objections?

(c) If the 15th Dalai Lama candidate is discovered in Indian territory, will India publicly acknowledge this fact? If not, what will be the status of the Living Buddha candidate?

(d) Since a number of the exile community holds Indian citizenship, how would the country deal with the situation if the selected Dalai Lama candidate were an Indian national?

(e) In the aforementioned second or third scenario, would India permit the 15th Dalai Lama unfettered access to the 14th Dalai Lama’s residence and possession of the ritual objects and symbols of the Dalai Lama, along with the enthronement ceremony?

(f) How would India deal with the PRC’s demands that the ritual objects and symbols of the Dalai Lamas belong to China and must be returned to them? Along with the political implications, this might also have legal implications.

(g) The Living Buddha child, who is identified as the 15th Dalai Lama, will be under the guidance of a regency council until maturity. What relationship, if any, will India have with this regency council, and under what guidelines might they be permitted to operate in India?

Since this set of questions has both foreign policy and domestic implications, they should be dealt with on the principle of separating the question of recognition from that of location or residence. In constitutional terms, religious organizations have the right to determine their own leadership, residence, and practices without state interference. The PRC will seek to pressure India to reject the alternative candidate, but the government of India need not express any view either in favor of or against such a candidate on the grounds that the selection of religious leaders by the concerned communities is permitted within the scope of the constitution and laws of the land.



Allowing the candidate to reside in India is also in keeping with India's ethos and past practice. The demand of the Tibetan community to permit access to their 15th Dalai Lama candidate to the current Dalai Lama's ritual objects and symbols of office is a more sensitive issue. The PRC will claim ownership over the ritual objects and symbols, alleging that they were illegally smuggled out of India and should be returned.

#### Conclusion

India is not central to the framing of Chinese policy on the Dalai Lama and the reincarnation issue. The Chinese policy is primarily driven by concerns regarding maintaining stability and political control over Tibet and what the United States might do during the transition to destabilize Tibet and discredit China internationally. India has a stake in the reincarnation question due to the domestic following and the presence of the exile community on Indian soil. It is not a passive spectator.

Even six decades after he left Tibet, the Dalai Lama still holds significant influence over the hearts and minds of Tibetans; this worries Beijing, as does Washington's escalating support for the Tibetan cause and the Dalai Lama personally. Therefore, there has been a hardening of the PRC's position on the 14th Dalai Lama and the reincarnation question in the past fifteen years. This hardening is likely to create fresh challenges for India's policy, particularly on the key questions of the reincarnation and recognition of the 15th Dalai Lama, as well as the interregnum between the passing of the 14th Dalai Lama and the selection of his successor.

For the past sixty-five years, an uneasy *modus vivendi* between India and China has prevailed because both acknowledge the same individual as the 14th Dalai Lama. This might not be the case after his passing since a Dalai Lama reincarnation found outside the PRC will not be accepted by China. Since the primary residence, temporary religious seat, and symbols of the Dalai Lama are located in India, its approach to the reincarnation question and handling of the candidate found outside China will become of great interest to the PRC. Indian policy is likely to be tested on the touchstone of how it helps or hinders the PRC in its twin objectives of maintaining stability in Tibet and deterring American efforts to destabilize Tibet. This future quagmire should necessitate India to craft policy on this subject, bearing in mind not only its relations with the PRC and the Tibetan community in India and abroad but also the context of Sino-U.S. and Indo-U.S. relations.

Lastly, inaction would not be sustainable in the face of international and domestic public pressure to allow the Dalai Lama candidate to take up his duties in Dharamsala. Taking unilateral steps to please the PRC in the hope that the passing of the 14th Dalai Lama is

an opportunity to reset the bilateral relationship is unlikely to be viewed in a similar vein by the PRC. Pondering the questions posed in the final part of this paper may lead to clarity of objectives, help to handle the difficulties, and create opportunities for India to pursue its basic goals.

#### **Military Digest | A Tibetan spy who was a Gorkha soldier: Dramatic rise and sudden fall of Lha Tsering**

11 November 2024, [The Indian Express](#), Man Aman Singh Chhina

Lha Tsering was a soldier of Gorkha Rifles, an officer of the Intelligence Corps, and then an Assistant Director in the Intelligence Bureau.



*Lieutenant Tsering served in the 1/10 Gurkha Rifles (now Gorkha Rifles) as a Non Commissioner Officer (NCO) in the First World War (1914-18) and was commissioned in October 1942 during the Second World War. ( Photo courtesy: Facebook/ Devendra Basnet)*

As early as 1949, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) was concerned about the developing political situation in China and its impact on Tibet. The agency started ramping up its coverage of the Sino-Tibet border, and during these preparations, the IB hired a unique person whose rise was as dramatic as his eventual fall. But before touching on the story of Lha Tsering, a soldier of Gorkha Rifles, an officer of the Intelligence Corps, and then an Assistant Director in IB, let us take a look at the intelligence agency's appreciation of the situation in Tibet just a year and a half after Indian Independence.

Archived documents reveal that in April 1949, the Director IB (DIB) wrote a top-secret note on the situation in China and its possible effects on Tibet. With this situational appreciation in mind, the DIB recommended the urgent need for re-organising and expanding the intelligence system so as to gather intelligence from Tibet and the Indo-Tibetan Border.

Judging from the progress of the civil war in China, he concluded that it would not be long before the Communist elements in China would have the dominant voice in Chinese national and international affairs and would begin meddling with the affairs of Tibet.

A Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) note states, "In his opinion such activities in Tibet might have far reaching

consequences on the Indo-Tibetan border and Sikkim and Bhutan who have many ties with Tibet. The DIB accordingly proposed an increase in his intelligence staff on the Indo-Tibetan Border.”

Another memorandum prepared by the Deputy Director of IB in May 1949 stated that judging from reports coming in, Tibet had not taken kindly to the idea of a Communist-dominated China and would seek again to emphasise her independent status.

“In fact many of her recent actions, which have been against the wishes of the Chinese Government, have been with a view to establish her claim that she is an independent state. It is difficult to say what line the future Government of China is likely to take, but there seems to be no reason to doubt that they will make efforts to extend their influence and to propagate their ideology in an area which according to the Chinese Government is part of their territory,” the memorandum says.

### **The entry of Lha Tsering**

Against this backdrop, the DIB moved a proposal that Lieutenant Lhe Tsering, who had been working since August 1, 1946, at Kalimpong as Deputy Central Intelligence Officer (DCIO) in charge of Sino-Tibetan affairs, be appointed as an Assistant Director. Lieutenant Tsering served in the 1/10 Gurkha Rifles (now Gorkha Rifles) as a Non Commissioner Officer (NCO) in the First World War (1914-18) and was commissioned in October 1942 during the Second World War.

He served in the [Intelligence Corps](#) in Calcutta, Dacca, New Delhi and Ranchi till his services were placed at the disposal of the Government of India under the Intelligence Bureau as DCIO.

The DIB added that Tsering was conversant with the Nepali, Tibetan, and Hindi languages and had a very good Tibetan background. A character roll of Lieutenant Lha Tsering prepared by the IB states that he was born in January 1903, though the exact date of his birth is not known. He studied up to matriculation. “We propose to retain Mr. Tsering as Assistant Director, for an indefinite period. The post of Assistant Director held by him is at present sanctioned upto 28.2.1951 only but there is every likelihood of its continuance beyond this date for indefinite period on year to year basis. We have not made any efforts to obtain the services of a serving State Police officer for this post, because Mr. Tsering is considered to be specially suited for the job,” the character roll states. The chief part of his duties were concerned with notables of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, and being a Tibetan himself, he had an easy access to these circles without the fear of raising suspicions. “There are no Tibetan-knowing officers in any State Police cadres and any other officer would not be of any use for this job,” the IB note said.

However, the evaluation of Lha Tsering’s capabilities suddenly took a downturn in April 1952, when the IB wrote to the MHA seeking his reversion to the DCIO post.

“Lha Tsering was promoted to the rank of Assistant Director, W.E.F. 1.4.50. We have watched his work since then but find that he is not upto the mark. The Director has therefore decided to revert him to the temporary post of D.C.I.O. which he was holding before his promotion to the rank of Assistant Director,” the note states.

The matter did not end there, and there was a move to terminate his services. There was considerable movement of files between various departments on this move, with objections being raised and answered. In the meantime, rather than be demoted in rank, Lha Tsering chose to quit the IB and resigned. Thus ended the remarkable career of a Tibetan spy.

### **As Trump Threatens a Wider Trade War, the U.S. Confronts a Changed China**

11 November 2024, [The New York Times](#), Peter S. Goodman

The Chinese economy is more dependent on exports, making tariffs more potent, yet it’s less reliant on American markets and increasingly bent on self-sufficiency.



*Chinese leaders, seeking to accelerate industrial advances, are directing investment into robotics and aviation.*

Eight years ago, when a newly elected Donald J. Trump promised to apply the powers of the Oval Office to start a trade war with China, the target of his ire was widely viewed as a juggernaut. China was the indispensable factory floor to the world and a swiftly developing market for goods and services.

As Mr. Trump now prepares for his second stint in the White House, he is vowing to intensify trade hostilities with China by imposing additional tariffs of 60 percent or more on all Chinese imports. He is pressuring a country that has been chastened by a powerful combination of overlapping forces: the calamitous end of a real estate investment binge,

incalculable losses in the banking system, a local government debt crisis, flagging economic growth and chronically low prices — a potential harbinger of long-term stagnation.

The decline of fortunes at home has made Chinese companies especially focused on sales abroad. And that makes the country vulnerable to any threat to its export growth, a weakness that would enhance the expected pressure from the Trump administration as it plans to seek a deal that would increase Chinese purchases of American goods.

“The balance of power has certainly shifted in favor of the United States,” said Eswar Prasad, a professor of trade policy at Cornell University who was previously the head of the China division at the International Monetary Fund. “The Chinese economy is not quite on the ropes, but it has been struggling for a while.”

Yet complicating factors beneath that widely shared assessment may strengthen China’s ability to endure whatever measures the incoming Trump administration may have in store.

Most immediately, the Chinese government possesses formidable resources to stoke the domestic economy. After long declining to loosen credit for fear of reviving investment in real estate, China’s central bank this year lowered borrowing costs for homeowners and businesses. On Friday, the government approved a \$1.4 trillion rescue plan that would allow local governments to refinance existing debts at lower rates of interest.

At the same time, a government-led strategy to advance the nation’s industrial prowess has turned China into the dominant supplier of electric vehicles and other clean energy technologies. That gives Chinese companies a hold on rapidly growing markets for critical wares regardless of American tariffs. In an era of rising alarm over climate change, the world can either use Chinese-made gear to limit carbon emissions or shun Chinese industry. At least for now, it is struggling to do both.

China is less dependent on access to American markets than it was the last time Mr. Trump ratcheted up tariffs. The wave of American import duties imposed by the Trump administration, beginning in 2018 and continuing under the Biden administration, eventually covered some \$400 billion in Chinese goods. Chinese factories in turn looked to Southeast Asia and Latin America for customers.

Over the last six years, China’s share of American imports has dropped to 13 percent from 20 percent, according to TS Lombard, an investment research firm in London, though some of that shift reflects goods that end up in the United States after being routed through countries like Mexico and Vietnam in order to avoid American tariffs.

As Europe has more recently added its own tariffs to Chinese-made electric vehicles, China has accelerated its push to expand sales in other regions.

“Beijing is using the Global South to offset the loss of market share to the West,” said Jie Yu, a senior research fellow at Chatham House in London.

China’s leaders have taken a similar approach to goods like agricultural commodities, shifting some purchases of soybeans from American farmers to suppliers in Brazil and Argentina.

That experience may give Beijing confidence that it can hold firm against escalating tariffs and retaliate with reductions in American imports, especially of agricultural products. China could also further restrict its exports of critical minerals.

“China has more leverage than the first time around,” said Scott Kennedy, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. “It has a range of tools it can mobilize to push back and put some hurt on the U.S. economy if it believes Trump is pursuing outright economic war.”

Mr. Trump may opt to moderate his threats of tariffs, concluding that the American economy would be imperiled by them. Economists warn that widespread taxes on imports would increase consumer prices and stymie domestic manufacturers that rely on imported components.

Still, if Mr. Trump does follow through, Chinese industry would suffer.

Exports would plunge by 8 percent over the following year while shaving 2 percent off China’s annual economic growth, estimates Larry Hu, chief China economist at Macquarie Group, an Australian financial services firm. And if Mr. Trump seeks to close off imports of goods made by Chinese companies in other countries like Mexico, the damage would be greater still.

China’s increased susceptibility to trade disruption is underscored by the fact that the country now produces 17 percent of global exports, up from 12 percent during Mr. Trump’s first term, according to TS Lombard.

Chinese industry is often described as being dominated by large, state-owned companies that are governed through crippling bureaucracy and the imperatives of the ruling Communist Party, making them ill-suited to adjust to changing market conditions — another ostensible source of American leverage.

But this conception misses the emergence of a vast and far more nimble private sector, which now accounts for roughly half of Chinese exports, compared with 9 percent for state-owned companies, according to Nicholas R. Lardy, a China expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington.

“This has been a tremendous structural change,” Mr. Lardy said. “It gives them more adaptability.”

The Chinese government has the capacity to compensate for diminished exports by turning on spending, experts say. It can deploy its state-owned banks and corporate giants toward national goals like economic growth.

So far, the stimulus plans emerging from Beijing have been more gradual and modest than some anticipated. Still, they have resonated as a signal that China's leaders are concerned about public dissatisfaction with stagnating living standards and have resolved to promote economic growth.

"Traders I speak to in China, they describe it as going from your deathbed straight to a nightclub," Rory Green, chief China economist at TS Lombard, said. "It's a huge change in an array of policies."

The pivot toward stimulus by Beijing underscores a central feature of the Chinese system in adapting to shocks. Ruled by the all-powerful Chinese Communist Party, the country operates with draconian controls on individual expression and absent free elections. Yet once the Party settles on the need for an emergency course, it has the power to quickly establish policies free of the impediments found in democratic societies. "In terms of moving quickly and resolving a crisis, the C.C.P. is highly effective," Mr. Green said. "They have a lot of levers to pull."

China's president, Xi Jinping, has spent the last decade consolidating power and securing an unlimited claim on his office.

When Mr. Trump first took office in 2017, Mr. Xi was only four years into his tenure and still legally restricted to two five-year terms. He had only recently embarked on an initiative known as Made in China 2025: The government directed cheap land, voluminous state credit and highly trained experts toward increasing the country's capacity in 10 advanced technology industries.

In crucial areas, that plan has achieved extraordinary returns. China now controls at least 60 percent of the global capacity to make solar cells, wind turbines, batteries and other components for energy systems that reduce carbon emissions, according to the International Energy Agency. Chinese investment amounts to an even higher share of announced expansions.

Chinese companies are increasingly dominant in the realm of mobile telephones, with eight of the 10 largest brands by volume headquartered in China, according to a study by the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada.

In one regard, the Chinese plan has pointedly failed to achieve a critical objective — closing the gap in capability that separates domestic computer chips from the most advanced varieties made in Taiwan, using technology from the United States, Europe and Japan.

The Biden administration has employed export controls on American companies while pressuring allies to withhold technology that could allow Chinese industry to catch up.

But that campaign may have indirectly increased China's ability to withstand whatever trade restrictions are on the way, some experts assert.

"These export restrictions are accelerating China's drive for self-sufficiency," Mr. Lardy, the Peterson Institute economist, said. "This idea that we can slow them down across the board strikes me as uninformed."

Mr. Trump's next wave of proposed tariffs would present a challenge. Yet it would also reinforce a notion that has gained currency in Beijing: that China can no longer rely on foreign markets to supply needed components and technologies.

"Chinese leadership will learn a hard lesson that they cannot really depend on anyone but themselves," said Lynette Ong, professor of Chinese politics at the University of Toronto. "Trump's second term may be a gift for China's economic self-reliance."

### **Beijing's Transnational Repression of Dissidents: From Bad to Worse**

09 November 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), Marco Respinti

The chilling story of a Uyghur reporter exiled in the US is the sad tip of a shivering iceberg.

That the repression exerted by the Beijing's communist regime on Uyghurs has extended beyond the borders of the People's Republic of China (PRC), employing a strategy of transnational repression to target the diaspora communities worldwide, is today a known fact.

This involves a variety of tactics aimed at silencing, intimidating, or surveilling abroad individuals who are critical of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) policies or who advocate for Uyghur rights.

Recently, Paris-based international human rights organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) shared the testimony of a Uyghur journalist exiled in the United States whose friends who are still in the PRC were detained in retaliation for his work.

The exiled journalist's story illustrated the transnational repression carried out by the CCP to extend censorship beyond its borders. International news reporter Kasim Abdurehim Kashgar, who left China for the US in 2017 due to the Chinese regime's intense repression in the XUAR, said Uyghur journalists like him find no escape from the CCP, even in exile. According to the report by RSF, following Kashgar's emigration, those in his entourage in the PRC were interrogated and, in some cases, imprisoned.

"The Chinese authorities wanted me to stop my investigations and work for the regime's propaganda.



In the months following my refusal, at least twelve people with whom I had worked in a language school were arrested and questioned about me. Some were even sentenced to up to seven years in prison," the exiled journalist, who investigates crimes committed against Uyghurs for the American public media Voice of America (VOA), explained. The journalist said one of his friends was sentenced to nine years in prison, while four of his former colleagues were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment on obscure charges, and only one was released, while the fate of the others remains unknown.

Working under a pseudonym for many years, the journalist revealed his identity in the documentary "From Fear to Freedom: A Uyghur's Journey" broadcast by VOA in June last year. As per the RSF report, that reporter's mental health suffered as his close circle was targeted by the Chinese authorities. "After learning about their detention, I developed anxiety and depression," Kashgar said. "I am asking the authorities to release them because they have nothing to do with my work," he added.

Kashgar remains determined to continue his investigations, despite the pressure. Through extensive research, he discovered his former colleagues were being detained. "It took me three years to reveal their arrests. I only decided to go public recently, when I had gathered solid evidence from five different and unrelated sources," Kashgar told RSF.

Commenting on the matter, RSF Asia-Pacific Bureau Director Cédric Alviani said the journalist's chilling testimony "illustrates the full extent of the transnational repression carried out by the Chinese regime to prevent exiled journalists from revealing the atrocities it is committing in Xinjiang." He added: "The international community must mobilise to protect journalists making the difficult decision to go into exile, as well as their families who remain in China."

Also, in 2024 the police of the PRC arrested two journalists from the Kazakh minority working for the local public channel Xinjiang Television, as well as several other journalists whose identities have not yet been confirmed, reports RSF. The organization counts at least 79 detained individuals among journalists and press freedom activists, including renown Sakharov prize winner Ilham Tohti.

In fact, the PRC is ranked 172nd out of 180 countries in RSF's 2024 World Press Freedom Index. And according to a report by the Washington-based human rights group Freedom House, the parts of the Chinese communist party-state apparatus involved in transnational repression are as diverse as the targets and tactics of the campaign.

The importance of extending the party's grip on overseas Chinese and ethnic minority exiles originates with the highest echelons of the CCP, Freedom House

said. "Besides CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping's own advancement of sweeping anti-corruption campaigns, leaked speeches from other members of the Politburo high up in the security apparatus are explicit about the priority that should be given to the 'overseas struggle' against perceived party enemies," the report added.

VOA recently reported that many exiled Uyghurs in the United States claimed the Chinese regime has ramped up transnational repression against them, using their relatives who still live in China to threaten them into silence abroad. VOA reported that the United States' domestic intelligence and security service Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is aware of such activity targeting Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups in the US.

"Tactics and patterns morph with advancements in technology," the FBI said in a statement to VOA. These acts, "often identified as transnational repression," represent "severe violations of international norms, US law, and individual rights and freedoms. TNR conducted by any government, against any person including Uyghur Americans, is unacceptable," the federal police agency was quoted as saying by VOA.

Earlier in May this year, UK-based human rights group Amnesty International reported some Chinese and Hong Kong students studying in Europe and North America claimed they were being photographed and followed at protests in their host cities, while many said their families in China had been targeted and threatened by police in connection with the students' activism overseas.

But this transnational repression, a grave violation of human rights, extending the reach of its authoritarian control beyond its borders, not only affects Uyghurs but also poses broader challenges to global human rights and international diplomacy.

Addressing these issues requires coordinated international action, robust support for Uyghur advocacy, and continued scrutiny of Beijing practices, as all experts on the PRC say. As the situation evolves, the global community's response will play a critical role in shaping the future of Uyghur rights and freedoms.

### **Sitting in India, We Have Become Internal Exiles**

09 November 2024, [The Wire](#), Himraj Dang

*If the choices are between the 'long hope' and the 'long defeat', I think internal exile is a natural waystation till we start to heal ourselves and the planet we are burning.*

I recently attended a set of programmes entitled, 'The Spirit of Tibet: Celebrating Culture and Compassion.' The programmes included a panel on 'Exile Stories: Crafting Resilience.' Various panellists, working in the arts, described a life of resistance and what it meant.



The panellists described their efforts at contributing to the exile community, the importance of memory, and, finally, how survival is itself a contribution, even success.

Sitting on my home turf, surrounded by familiar sights and sounds, people who look like me (ahem!), I would not be expected to identify with exile. And, yet, listening to this panel triggered a close identification with the state of exile.

An exile from reason in public life, from an ingrained respect for nature, a sense of all-pervasive gratitude, from the memories and the loving care of a fortunate childhood, from family supports that have inevitably drifted apart, from friends who live very far away, from elders taken before time, from unconstrained times in the wilds, from imbibing so much of the idealism of earlier days...mature sensitivity accepts these have all passed from this life. Leaving behind a pervasive sense of loss only leavened by philosophy.

Contrast this with the braggadocio of the growing numbers who have lapped up the formulaic responses to Huntington's questions of identity, those looking for simple solutions to layered challenges in public policy, for binaries to understand complex problems, for heroic leaders to wave magic wands and solve all our problems, for news that comes pre-digested in social media fit for short attention spans, from the repeated highs of unending professional success, from the pleasures of an ever-expanding array of material possessions, trophies, and marks of despoliation left upon this world.

There is no minimising the despair that comes from losing one's connection to one's land and culture. The way Tibetans have worked to keep their culture alive in the diaspora with positivity and compassion is impressive. But aren't the rest of us in some kind of exile? For constitutionalists, for highly sensitive people, for environmentalists, for those suffering from ecological grief, or even solastalgia, for those from whom history and its lessons matter (based on facts, not caricatures), and for the rare few who have reconciled rationality with love.

We live, as the Tibetan artists spoke, 'in a life of imagination, where we can imagine the lost nation (or the lost idealism).'

To do so, I would state, is to be in internal exile. The Russians capture it best as "*vnutrennaya emigratsia*," or internal emigration. An escape inward from a malevolent world; an embrace of one's alienation.

### **The environment**

When I think of the 6,500 ancient deodar trees to be cut for the doubling of the tourist road from Uttarkashi to beloved Harsil, bypassing the mandatory environmental impact assessment and community hearings, and ignoring simpler alternatives like expanding embankments for overtaking, my biggest concern is the loss of agency for the community. The

arms of the state simply do not see the need for dialogue.

We can seek refuge in the memory of the ancientness and beauty of the Taknaur valley, and imagine a more enlightened life of consultation, mediated by an economics which internalises externalities, and even prayer at the ancient Mukhba shrine. Refuge in memory, imagination, and prayer, how different is this from the story of Tibetan exile? Has the much-touted Chinese Communist Party regime at last come to India to deliver ease of doing business?

From west to east, the Himalayas are being bombed for development, completely rejecting community consultation, alternative approaches, or ancient wisdom. Highway doubling to the Char Dham in Uttarakhand fronted by imperatives of national security, dams too close to glaciers in Sikkim, the prospects of limitless solar parks for Ladakh, and 'cutting' everywhere, the cutting of mountains for roads without embankments or water channels, and tunnels without escape adits.

Scanning the landscape south from the Gangotri Valley to the Nicobar Islands where we plan to cut almost a million tropical trees, attempting to compensate for this with a Dubai-inspired safari park in arid Haryana, is an unfolding story of unexamined destruction.

The heart of this dystopian journey is in central India: the Ken-Betwa river inter-linking project, which would construct a dam in the heart of Panna National Park to pump an imagined water surplus, uphill, to another drying river basin, at the cost of Rs 45,000 crore. For 20 years, ever since I heard about this fantastic scheme, I have persevered to question it. Still at it: there is no movement, compromise, or exploration of alternatives.

I just read the elephant population of India has been reduced by 20%, or nearly, 4,000 souls, in just a decade, and the shocking report on this has been withdrawn even as it is getting dated. We privilege cows and revere elephants but save neither cows nor elephants.

In the face of such enormous one-sided destruction, it seems even the divinities have abandoned us, there are no checks left. Exiled from the public arena, where multi-dimensional planning, consultation, and inquiry are impossible, how does one live in such times? The response varies from collaboration with the regnant evil to an internal exile of resistance.

### **Collaboration**

Anne Applebaum wrote an intriguing essay in *The Atlantic*, 'History will judge the complicit.' In this essay, she explored what it took for two people from similar backgrounds to part ways: one to become a collaborator and the other to reject the cruel, unfair, and unequal communist regime they both grew up with.

In a series of personality sketches, Czeslaw Milosz explores the diverse rationales for collaboration by intellectuals. The leading tropes set out were: 'We can use this moment to achieve great things'; 'We can protect the country from the (lunatic) President'; 'I, personally, benefit'; 'I must remain close to power'; 'Nothing matters'; 'My side may be flawed, but the political opposition is much worse'; and, 'I am afraid to speak out.'

None of these follows the prescription of the Polish foreign minister, Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, who had spent a lifetime in dissent: 'Just try to be decent,' he exhorted. In Applebaum's view, history will only remember the effort at decency, none of the self-serving excuses.

### **Or resistance**

At the Tibet forum, the artists reminded us how important sheer survival is for resistance. To give shape to resistance by imagining the lost community. To plan the return. Using the time gained to tell stories, to keep memory alive. In the evocative turn of phrase by Milan Kundera, 'the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory over forgetting.'

When I speak with peers, I am always shocked at how shallow the roots of liberal democracy are in this country, and how few people care about joining the dots between the ever-expanding talons of the state and condition of liberty, or remembering why this country was created, impossibly (and imperfectly) dredging from its hoary civilization the very best for the young Republic.

Sitting in India, we have become internal exiles. We live in the interstices ignored by the state: remote places in the mountains and forests, now getting rapidly 'developed'; the dying, private institutions and academic refuges, all being yoked to the national project. Seeking solace in books, and, still, the power of connecting with the external world.

A Tibetan activist, Tenzin Tsundue, rightly describes home as 'not a house but the purpose that takes its places, and sometimes away from our own home. Reasons to live can make strangers a family and no country foreign.' Global citizenship provides exiles, both the internal and external versions, greater understanding and wider access to remote interstices to help preserve culture and memory. Alas, even this notional global home, and engagement with global confreres, only reveals the retreat of liberty and reason elsewhere.

### **In conclusion...**

Pamela Swanigan wrote an interesting essay in *NOEMA*, cautioning against the hope that human behaviour will change and return to values that sacralise nature. Asking us instead to appreciate J.R.R. Tolkien's view in accepting reality and looking for acts of heroism against the 'earth-and-sky destroyers,' and

to achieve small victories that postpone the inevitable defeat of the natural world that sustains us.

Frankly, if the choices are between the 'long hope' and the 'long defeat', I think internal exile is a natural waystation till faith is realised or humanity itself changes course, and we start to heal ourselves and the planet we are burning.

### **The Secret Sauce of the China-India Rivalry Is Education**

08 November 2024, Mint

*For 100 years, the two countries have followed different paths to accumulating human capital, with striking results.*

The world's two most-populous nations began to open up to the world around the same time, in the early 1990s. But while both grew rapidly and pulled hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, China's per capita income is now more than double India's, when their currencies are adjusted for their true purchasing power. What's behind the divergence?

Beijing and New Delhi pursued quite separate paths to globalization. One set its sights on becoming the world's factory, starting with toys and electronics, and moving on to electric cars and semiconductors. The other emphasized services like computer software. Their population structures were dissimilar, too. A one-child policy gave rise to a pronounced youth bulge and brought China to the brink of rich-country status before it started turning old. India's demographic destiny is playing out now, though minus the jobs to absorb surplus farm labor.

And then there are differences in political institutions. China's is a single-party state, while India is a messy, multiparty, electoral democracy.

This is the conventional narrative. But what if there was a more fundamental force operating beneath the surface, a sharp departure in the long history of how the two nations embraced modern education? That's the thesis of *The Making of China and India in 21st Century*, a new paper by Nitin Kumar Bharti and Li Yang. The scholars at the Paris School of Economics' World Inequality Lab have pored over official reports and yearbooks going back to 1900 to make a database of who studied what in the two countries, for how long, and what was taught to them. The different courses charted by China and India for the last 100 years may have led to striking outcomes for human capital and productivity.

Here's what Bharti and Yang found. Thanks to a 50-year head-start in exposure to Western learning, India had a student population that was eight times bigger than China's at the turn of the 20th century. China began to catch up only after the abolition of the

imperial examination system in 1905 bid farewell to Confucianism. By the 1930s, it had achieved parity with India's overall enrolment.

In the 1950s, the newly formed People's Republic kept up a steady pace of expansion, not even allowing the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) to come in the way of secondary schooling. Where the chaotic decade extracted a heavy price was in undergraduate education. In the early 1980s, India's college enrollment ratio was five times higher than China's. By 2020, however, the story had changed: China was sending a far bigger share of its university-age cohort to tertiary institutions than India.

The different trajectories have their roots in history. China's late-19th-century Qing dynasty rulers wanted manpower with vocational skills to handle military-related production. By contrast, India's British colonial masters had little interest in creating a manufacturing base. So they seeded the education system with a bias for producing clerks and junior administrators. Only the more affluent sections of the society had access to government jobs, and to the education required to land them. After independence in 1947, India doubled down on tertiary institutions, investing in elite colleges at the expense of basic reading and math skills.

The decision to emphasize tertiary education was a top-down choice for India, where half the individuals born in the 1960s were likely to remain illiterate, compared with 10% in China, according to the Bharti-Yang study. Most school-age Indian kids dropped out quickly (if they even started), either because nobody came to their villages to teach, or because more hands were needed to augment the family labor pool. A bottom-up strategy involves giving a large number of young pupils five years of learning, then enabling an increasingly bigger subset of them to attend high schools for a total of 12 years of instruction — before opening pathways to 16 years of education. This is what China chose.

An even more stark finding of the study is about college majors. Historically, India has had a preponderance of social-science graduates at the bachelor's degree level. In China, however, the overrepresentation of humanities, law and business began to ebb as early as the 1930s as more undergraduates got trained as teachers, scientists, engineers, doctors and farming experts.

This might have had a bearing on growth. As a 1991 paper by Kevin Murphy, Andrei Shleifer, and Robert Vishny has shown, a country that wants to expand faster needs more engineers than lawyers. (Law and economics have seen a revival in China after economic reforms created new demand for human capital in these areas.)

The common view, particularly in the US, is that India is the "land of engineers." It's true that many tech-

industry founders and chief executives, including the CEOs of Microsoft Corp. and Alphabet Inc., were born and educated in India. But the huge expansion of its high-speed train network — or the sophistication of its EVs — shows that Bharti and Yang may have zeroed in on an often-overlooked source of China's competitiveness. "China's higher share of engineering and vocational graduates, combined with a higher share of primary and secondary graduates, lends itself more readily to a focus on manufacturing," the authors say.

Deng Xiaoping's 1992 tour of southern China signaled Beijing's willingness to engage with capital from the West, while retaining the primacy of the Communist Party. Just a few months earlier, Manmohan Singh, then the new Indian finance minister, too, had made a decisive break from decades of Soviet-inspired socialism and isolationism. India, he said, was going to be a major economic actor. "No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come," Singh said, invoking Victor Hugo.

The residues of history, however, are often hard to brush off. The top-down, elitist bias that the British put into India's education has carried over. One final finding in the Bharti-Yang paper proves the point: In 1976, China had 160 million people who had missed out on regular schooling in adult education programs, compared with just 1 million in India. The progeny of those 159 million extra minds to whom China gave literacy and numeracy may have played more than a small role in beating India at growth.

### Eyes north, ears south

07 November 2024, [The Kathmandu Post](#), Sanjeev Satgainya

It's now all but certain: Oli will visit [China](#) in early December. This trip would mark a break from the tradition of Nepali prime ministers making their first "official" visit to India. There is nothing to quibble about, as flying to New Delhi first is merely an unwritten custom, not a formal requirement. So, Oli's planned visit to Beijing isn't a breach of any protocol; rather, it could set a precedent.

Yet questions have lingered over why Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hasn't extended an invitation to Oli, sparking speculation that Oli began planning a trip to China after waiting in vain for an invite from New Delhi. In some circles, there is a belief that Oli's ascension to power is not to India's liking. Some within Oli's orbit have remarked that certain foreign powers have been trying to unseat the government without providing evidence to support this claim.

### Oli and India amid global shifts

Even Oli can't deny that his past actions and rhetoric have frequently irked New Delhi. While his assertive

stance may have earned him a “nationalist” image among sections of Nepali society, it has also placed him in India’s bad books. Attempts at rapprochement have been met with a cold shoulder, leaving him to orchestrate his return to power. Since the 2022 elections, he’s worn many hats: Coalition partner, opposition leader, and now, once again, prime minister.

Yet India appears unconvinced. While Modi’s government rolled out the red carpet for Arzu Rana Deuba of the Nepali Congress, who serves as foreign minister in Oli’s Cabinet, it has yet to extend an invitation to Oli, despite him being in office for over 100 days and even meeting Modi in New York in September. Meanwhile, Oli’s government has repeatedly signalled its keenness to host Modi in Nepal, failing to elicit any concrete response.

Then, has India abandoned its long-standing tradition of hosting the Nepali prime minister soon after a new government is formed? If so, this raises broader questions about India’s much-touted “Neighborhood First” policy. Extending an invitation to Oli could have shown goodwill and reinforced New Delhi’s proclamation that “Nepal is a special priority partner.”

Amid rapid geopolitical shifts, India may have set its sights on bigger platforms and larger roles in the world order, but it would do well not to ignore its neighbours or treat them based on the government of the day.

On Nepal’s part, its foreign policy is becoming increasingly complex, extending beyond bilateral ties with India and China, as Sino-Indian and Sino-American tensions and interests intersect more with a growing US influence in Asia amid shifting global dynamics. Oli, as the incumbent, needs to tread carefully. His role demands deft management of relations with India and China while also recalibrating Nepal’s strategic posture in a complex and evolving geopolitical landscape.

#### **The northern nexus**

Nepal’s communist leaders often lean towards, or appear to align with, China when they want to “send a message” to India. Oli is no exception. Even before an official invitation was extended, extensive media reports outlined Oli’s potential agenda for the trip, including efforts to secure a loan waiver for the Pokhara International Airport and agreements on some Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. The Chinese, who often practise quiet diplomacy, have yet to comment on Oli’s planned visit. Meanwhile, the BRI remains a contentious issue in Nepal, with Beijing eager to reframe all China-funded projects under its banner.

Oli currently leads a strong government with support from the Nepali Congress, the largest party in Parliament. Congress’s position on the BRI and other forms of assistance is clear—grants are acceptable but

loans are not. If Oli avoids pushing too aggressively with China, potentially unsettling his coalition partner, his position remains secure. Deeper engagement with China could bring valuable infrastructure projects, but it also raises concerns about long-term dependency and potential political leverage. It’s up to Nepali leaders—especially Oli—to negotiate beneficial terms. The Nepali public is divided on Chinese aid: Some see it as a counterbalance to dependence on India, while others fear it might lead to undue influence from the north. Both views have merit and flaws, making it crucial for the current leadership to steer Nepal’s foreign policy in a direction that serves and safeguards the country’s interests.

While Nepal could benefit from its northern neighbour’s economic and technological might, it is not in a position to ignore its southern neighbour, with whom it not only shares historical, cultural and people-to-people ties but also carries out a majority of its trade.

#### **The catch**

Diplomacy often works best when conducted quietly. Oli’s “preparations” to visit Beijing could have been kept under wraps until concrete plans were in place. The premature leak of his intentions by his circle allows room for speculation that this may have been a tactic to pressure India.

While China seeks to expand its influence in Nepal, it remains cautious about provoking India to the point of confrontation. And India, too, appears hesitant to employ its usual political manoeuvres in Nepal, particularly after recent setbacks in its immediate neighbourhood. As the Sino-Indian relations show signs of thawing, Nepal stands to benefit from reduced regional tension. Oli would be wise to avoid antagonising either neighbour.

Nonetheless, Oli has an uncanny inclination to critique India. While he uses backchannels to re-engage with New Delhi, his public jabs at India reveal his characteristic defiance. If his plan to visit China is driven more by spite than by a balanced foreign policy strategy, he risks making a strategic misstep.

Even after over 100 days in office, Oli’s performance has been dismal on various domestic fronts. Neither Oli nor his coalition partner, the Nepali Congress, has been able to justify the formation of this “stable” government.

With his political legacy on the line, Oli has an opportunity to “achieve something meaningful” as prime minister, and he should approach foreign policy with a view toward lasting impact.

Foreign policy is certainly a tough balancing act for a country like Nepal, sandwiched between the world’s two large economies. In an era of fluid geopolitics, future Nepali leaders will likely face further challenges in balancing relations with both neighbours. Nepali politicians’ failure to pursue a cohesive and balanced

foreign policy has already tarnished Nepal's international image.

In the intricate world of foreign policy, there's little room for grandstanding. And, adventurism can backfire. Oli has a unique chance to set a precedent for independent, balanced diplomacy that could serve as a model for the country and his successors.

His China sojourn could go beyond simply breaking the so-called custom of prioritising one neighbour over the other; it might even pave the way for a new approach. But this must be done in the best interest of Nepal, not to satisfy personal pride or vanity.

### **Mountains of Resistance: The Past and Present of Tibet's Quest for Independence**

06 November 2024, [Harvard International Review](#)

A leader in exile. Children forced into cultural assimilation. A barrage of failed protests. For more than 50 years, China, a global superpower with a population over 400 times that of Tibet, has occupied this small region. Since 1950, Tibet and China have lived in an uneasy balance. However, recent reports have shown exacerbated tensions between the two regions, as Tibetans have accused the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of severely restricting the practice of Tibetan traditions, including Buddhism.

#### **The Tumultuous Ties Between Tibet and China**

For centuries, Tibet and China co-existed in Central Asia—each as a distinct nation with individual culture and history. China's historical records and treaties demonstrate that China forged equal partnerships with its strong neighbor, Tibet, as early as 2,000 years ago. In 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama, who served as Tibet's political and spiritual leader, officially proclaimed the nation's independence, stating, "We are a small, religious, and independent nation." The nation had a theocratic government of which the Dalai Lama was the supreme religious and temporal head. With social security systems such as the provision of medical assistance to expecting mothers or care for the elderly, Tibet was a place of rich culture, art, and education.

However, in 1950, the newly established CCP launched an invasion of Tibet to incorporate it into the People's Republic of China. By seizing Tibet, China gained access to a multitude of rich natural resources and easier access to the strategically significant Indian border. Facing almost 40,000 Chinese troops, the young Dalai Lama was forced to recognize China's rule in return for loose promises that the CCP would protect Tibet's religious and political system. The CCP never kept these promises, and on March 10, 1959, hundreds of thousands of Tibetans surrounded the Potala Palace in Lhasa to protest

Chinese government occupation, marking the beginning of an ongoing Tibetan resistance. The CCP swiftly suppressed the uprising, and the then-14th Dalai Lama was forced to flee in disguise, dressing himself in a Chinese uniform and escaping on foot with his family members and ministers.

**Persistent Protests: The Struggle for Tibetan Freedom**  
Tibetans have been protesting China's presence in the country since 1959. However, in recent years, protests have gained momentum and prominence as the international community becomes increasingly aware of the CCP's actions. In March 2008, on the 49th anniversary of the National Uprising Day, hundreds of Tibetan monks gathered in Lhasa to protest Beijing's rule and advocate for the release of fellow Drepung monks, who protestors claimed were previously detained. The protests and violence escalated throughout the week, and by the end, human rights groups claimed that more than 140 people had died, although Chinese authorities put the figure closer to 22 deaths. April 2008, during the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, was another milestone in protests, as thousands gathered on the streets of San Francisco, California. Protests in Tibet mirrored those in San Francisco: thirty Tibetan protesters were convicted of arson, robbery, and attacking government offices related to the March violence. They received prison sentences ranging from three years to life. Hundreds of Tibetans have been imprisoned or outright killed by the CCP, while further deaths have resulted from self-immolation as a form of protest. Since 2009, 159 Tibetans have self-immolated, including 127 deaths and 26 minors under the age of 18.

Some changes in Chinese leadership led to periods of greater leniency. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping succeeded Mao Zedong after his death, and the government appeared to acknowledge past errors. Throughout the next decade, many Tibetan religious and traditional customs were allowed again. Tibetans were allowed to assume positions of social status, obtain a university education, study the newly acknowledged Tibetan culture, travel abroad, and even travel to India to meet the Dalai Lama. Deng Xiaoping even invited Gyalo Thondup, elder brother of the Dalai Lama, to the capital to discuss greater partnership between the two regions—although full independence was still not discussed. Letters between leaders also indicate relatively amicable discussions. Crucially, during this time period, tourism flourished, with over 43,500 foreigners visiting Tibet in 1987 and spending more than US\$15 million within the nation.

However, these small advances did not alter China's overall power in Tibet, and in 1987, protests reemerged.

The demonstrations continued until 1989 and led to troops from the Chinese People's Liberation Army



imposing checkpoints every few meters throughout Lhasa. The Chinese government declared martial law for 13 months, and CCTV footage leaked internationally displayed Chinese brutality.

#### Global Outcry and Growing Support

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom's 2024 annual report, published on May 1, 2024, revealed a lack of religious freedom in Tibet due to the CCP's growing suppression of Tibetan Buddhism. These restrictions are part of broader Sinicization efforts by the CCP government. In the past, "Sinicization" has referred to the concept of making something more Chinese in character. However, over the past few years, Sinicization has developed a secondary meaning referring to Chinese efforts to impose increased surveillance and security measures on Tibetan Buddhists. These measures restrict peaceful religious activities, including rituals and spiritual practices such as mantras and yogic techniques. Authorities have arrested and imprisoned Tibetan Buddhists for engaging in behaviors related to the Dalai Lama, with some Tibetan Buddhist monks dying in prison.

The CCP has also forced the separation of over one million Tibetan children from their families to attend state-run boarding schools. Tibetans have called these institutions "colonial boarding schools," designed to cultivate loyalty to the CCP and deny the children the opportunity to continue practicing their cultural traditions. The US commission recommended the US State Department designate China as one of the current 17 countries with "country of particular concern" (CPC) status regarding religious freedom violations. It also identified the Chinese government's "Sinicization of Religion" policy as a significant factor in the deterioration of religious freedom. The report stated that "Sinicization requires groups to follow the CCP's Marxist interpretation of religion, including by altering religious scriptures and doctrines to conform to that interpretation."

The US Congress has also stepped into the conflict; a month after Senate approval, the House voted on June 12, 2024 to pass a bill, the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act, urging China to mend ties with the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders. The legislation allows State Department officials to "actively and directly" counter disinformation about Tibet spread by the Chinese government, particularly claims that China has encompassed Tibet since "ancient times." President Biden signed this Act into law on July 12, 2024.

#### Tibetan Voices: Calls for Identity and Freedom

Calls from Tibetans have remained the same for decades: the protection of Tibetan identity, freedom, and human rights and the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet. Though in exile in India, the 14th Dalai Lama has established a democratic government, or the Central

Tibetan Administration, which advocates for greater freedom and rights for Tibet, termed the "Middle Way Approach." For 63 years, the democratic government-in-exile has endured in the foothills of the Himalayas. Alongside the Dalai Lama, the parliament is ruled by Deputy Speaker Dolma Tsering Teykhang, their elected leader. Although exiled, the government still aims to rule with democratic transparency and fairness, posting announcements and news on its website and keeping interested parties globally up-to-date on parliamentary sessions. The parliament-in-exile even meets with global leaders, such as former US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other US legislators and European Parliament members.

However, within the community of Tibetan exiles, there are two factions: those who simply ask for Tibet to remain a part of the People's Republic of China but with greater control over its own affairs (the "Middle Way Approach") and those who push for complete independence from China ("Rangzen"). From July 13th to 15th, 2024, the 7th International Rangzen Conference dedicated to Tibet's complete independence from China was held in Toronto, Canada. With over 250 delegates from around the world, the conference expressed a lack of trust for the Chinese government and condemned recent educational suppression techniques employed by the CCP. The rhetoric of the speakers was fairly assertive, with Rangzen claimed as a "birth right" and discussions on "[countering] China not just by vocalising...demands or organising protests, but by understanding the political landscape within China and its relations with other countries." Ultimately, internal turmoil persists in determining the best solution.

Differing from more violent secessionist movements in other countries, the Tibetan independence movement primarily takes a spiritual approach. This movement looks to the Dalai Lama as an influential freedom advocate who still spends his day "meditating on the roots of compassion and what he can do for his people." Although the man himself retired as a political leader in 2011, his values—introspection, meditation, spirituality, and peace—are still at the core of the movement. Indeed, despite initial violent uprisings met with suppression by Chinese authorities, the resistance movement in Tibet has been relatively peaceful. It remains to be seen whether this movement will achieve Tibetan sovereignty, finally reuniting the parliament and Dalai Lama with the Tibetan people.

## The CCP Insists that Chinese Islam Should Be “Confucianized”

04 November 2024, [Bitter Winter](#), Ma Wenyan

References to the Jinling School hide a call to “Sinicization” intended as unquestioning alignment with the Communist Party.

From October 17 to 18, 2024, the Jiangsu Islamic Association and the Research Center for Strengthening the Consciousness of the Chinese Nation’s Community hosted in Nanjing a conference on the “Research on Integrating Islam and Confucianism and Strengthening the Consciousness of the Chinese Nation’s Community.” The conference was part of a campaign promoting the Jinling School as a model of “Confucianized” Islam.

The Jinling School, formed in late Ming China, established Chinese-language educational institutions for Muslims. Ma Zhenwu, Zhang Shaoshan, and Ma Junshi, all Muslim teachers involved in both Sufism and Confucian studies, taught in Nanjing. They promoted the idea that Confucianism and Sufism were similar, advocating a connection between Islam and Confucianism. This movement faced opposition for introducing non-Islamic elements into Islam and eventually declined.

The CCP bureaucrats’ interest in the Jinling School is noteworthy, but it’s doubtful they fully understand the nuances of 17th and 18th-century Muslim Chinese theologians. For them, “Confucianizing” Islam means supporting the movement to eliminate “Arabic” architectural elements and replacing them with Chinese ones. Ultimately, the CCP is interested in a “Confucian” approach to Islam as a call for unquestioning alignment with the government in power. While this perspective may not accurately reflect the intentions of the Jinling School theologians, it is applicable to the current China Islamic Association.

Over 50 experts, scholars, and Islamic community representatives attended the seminar. Yang Faming, President of China Islamic Association, opened the meeting and delivered a keynote speech. Officials from the Second Division of the United Front Work Department, in charge of supervising religious communities, also attended the conference.

President Yang Faming praised the Jiangsu Islamic Association for promoting the sinicization of Islam in Jiangsu. He emphasized the importance of understanding the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CCP Central Committee and Xi Jinping’s thoughts on ethnic and religious work to integrate Islam and Confucianism. Yang urged carrying out basic research, editing Muslim classics to publish them in “Sinicized” versions, and highlighting the contemporary value of the Jinling School. He also called for “innovative approaches that reflect modern

times and are easily accepted by believers to advance the integration of Islam and Confucianism.”

In his speech, Qin Hua, member of the Party Leadership Group and Deputy Director of the Jiangsu Provincial Ethnic and Religious Affairs Commission, in turn emphasized that the Islamic community should follow political guidance, study and implement the spirit of the Third Plenary Session of the 20th CCP Central Committee, and increase publicity and education efforts to promote the Sinicization of Islam. He also stressed the importance of strengthening Confucian thought among Muslims as part of the efforts to Sinicize Islam.

## Why Has China Halted Centuries-old Sino-Nepal Borderland Marriages?

04 November 2024, [The Diplomat](#), Birat Anupam

China has offered no explanation why it halted cross-border marriages between Nepali and Tibetan people living in border villages like Olangchung Gola.

A man from Biratnagar in southeastern Nepal can marry a woman from Beijing in China, just as a man from China’s Kunming city can wed a woman from Kathmandu in Nepal. Beijing does not seem to have a problem with long-distance cross-border marriages.

However, it has forbidden cross-border marriages between people who live in the Sino-Nepali borderlands, within walking distance of each other, and with strong linguistic and cultural ties. Beijing has provided no explanation for this policy.

During my recent trek in Olangchung Gola village of Nepal’s far eastern Taplejung district, which borders both of Nepal’s neighbors, China and India, I found that cross-border marriages, once the norm in Olangchung Gola, are now a rarity.

At Olangchung Gola, a Himalayan village of 55 households, I met Chumbe Sherpa, an elderly Nepali man with four wives. His first wife, with whom he eloped in 1962, was from Tibet.



*Chumbe Sherpa’s first wife was from Tibet. Photo by Birat Anupam.*

However, nowadays, a Nepali in the borderlands cannot marry a Tibetan. Nepali men can no longer be sons-in-law of China's Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). "Cross-border marriage was not an issue until 2008," a Nepali local in Olangchung Gola told The Diplomat. It was "halted from the Chinese side after 2012."

According to Chumbe Sherpa, who is a former deputy chair of the erstwhile Olangchung Gola Village Development Committee (local government), previously Tibetan women were drawn to Nepal as Nepal was comparatively well-developed and the source of their food and other supplies. A marriage with a Nepali man was therefore an attractive option. However, in more recent decades, China has developed the Tibetan region, and the Tibetan border regions are more developed than the Nepali ones. The situation has reversed and commodities now flow into Nepal from Riu in Dinggye County of the TAR. Almost all daily essentials being used by residents of Olangchung Gola are from TAR and sport Mandarin characters. Olangchung Gola is closer to Riu bazaar than Taplejung's district headquarters of Phungling bazaar. Even meeting relatives on the Chinese side of the Sino-Nepali border has become tougher post-pandemic. "We can't go to our relatives' homes on the other side," Chhilamo Lama, whose maternal house is on the Chinese side said, pointing out that she has "to stay at a quarantine-like home," where her "relatives come to meet and greet" her. "This was not the case in the past," she said.

At Olangchung Gola, I saw people engaging in cross-border trade with China, which is just around 25 kilometers away.

Local residents as well as security personnel view the Chinese positively. Madhab Khatri, the recently deployed Border Outpost chief of Nepal's Armed Police Force said, "Chinese counterparts often ask if we need anything from them."

"We mostly go to Riu to sell our products and buy theirs. If we can't sell all our products in the Riu bazaar, Chinese policemen purchase our unsold items," Chhilamo Lama told The Diplomat.

Chheten Sherpa, a local leader of the Nepali Congress and a former local government member, said that the Chinese are helpful and are eager to have better road connectivity with Nepal. Chinese-sent bulldozers and oil tankers with Chinese number plates are visible at Olangchung Gola bazaar.

People from both sides of the Sino-Nepali border share a Buddhist cultural heritage and linguistic ties. Still, cross-border marriage doesn't exist anymore. The centuries-old borderlands marriage has been halted thanks to the Chinese side.

Yet Chinese leaders have waxed eloquent on the strong bonds, including matrimonial ties, between the people of the two countries. In a signed article written ahead of his Nepal visit in 2019, Chinese President Xi

Jinping noted, "In China's Tang Dynasty (618-907), Nepali Princess Bhrikuti was married to Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo, while the Chinese monk Huen Tsang visited Lumbini, the birthplace of the Buddha, and left many precious written accounts of his pilgrimage."

"The Himalayas soaring between our two countries have not blocked the friendly contacts between our two peoples," Chinese Prime Minister Zhou Enlai said at the Kathmandu Civic Reception during his visit to Nepal in April 1960.

Cross-border movement of people and goods, which was halted during the COVID-19 pandemic, was resumed recently. On May 25, Nepal and China reopened 14 traditional border crossings, including Olangchung Gola, in the presence of top leaders including Nepal's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Narayan Kaji Shrestha and Vice Chairman of China's Tibet Autonomous Region Silang Nima.

When border trade and crossings have resumed, why are traditional borderland marriages being blocked? Why are marriages between people who have to fly long distances across the Himalayas permitted when those who live just walking distance of each other are forbidden?

Beijing has not explained its strange policy.

### Is Sino-Pak 'Sweeter Than Honey' Friendship Turning Sour? – OpEd

04 November 2024, [Eurasian Review](#), Nilesh Kunwar

Organised by the Pakistan-China Institute [PCI], one had expected that the recent international conference on "*China at 75: A Journey of Progress, Transformation and Leadership*" would be yet another exchange of poetic phrases and adulations coined by Beijing and Islamabad to describe their relations being "*a friendship higher than Himalayas, deeper than ocean, sweeter than honey and stronger than steel.*" However, what Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong stated during this conference clearly indicates that relations between these two "*iron brothers*" may not be as hunky dory as they claim.

Saying that "*China wants to see steps against perpetrators of terrorist attacks and all those involved in such attacks could be penalised,*" Ambassador Zaidong made it clear that such incidents were "**unacceptable for China** and we do hope that the Pakistani side will ensure the safety and security of its nationals working in Pakistan." He also noted with concern that Chinese nationals had been "*attacked twice in only six months and these attacks have also caused casualties.*" [Emphasis added]. His terse message sans sweetness of honey undoubtedly came as a bolt from the blue for Islamabad.

Visibly rattled by the Chinese ambassador's undisguised admonition, Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar responded with the assurance that Islamabad would leave no stone unturned in ensuring security of Chinese nationals. Dar disclosed that he along with President Asif Ali Zardari would visit Beijing in early November to brief the Chinese authorities on the actions taken by Islamabad to bring perpetrators to book but refused to make any public disclosures on progress of investigations regarding terrorist attack on Chinese nationals. This raises strong suspicions that Islamabad may not have anything substantial to reveal.

That the Chinese ambassador exceeded his brief in this case is unlikely as China chooses its diplomats with due care and ensures that they implicitly toe Beijing's line and steer clear of any controversy.

So, when the Chinese ambassador broke protocol and took to the rostrum once again and issued a rejoinder to Dar's feeble assurances by highlighting the deteriorating security environment in Pakistan, it became absolutely clear that he was emphatically reiterating Beijing's concerns. Had Sino-Pak friendship truly been sweeter than honey as both Beijing and Islamabad claim, then would the Chinese ambassador use a public platform to launch a scathing attack on the Pakistan army's inability to check terrorist activities? Beijing has all the reasons to be annoyed. For one, it has invested heavily in the ambitious USD 62 billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC] project but Islamabad has not yet been able to fulfil its repayment obligations and is continuously seeking debt restructuring and bailouts. Pakistan's circular debt arising out of its inability to pay for subsidies has resulted in irregular reimbursement to Chinese Independent Power Producers [IPPs]. Lastly, despite repeated assurances, the Pakistan army has not been able to get the better of Baloch rebel groups targeting Chinese nationals working on CPEC projects.

Pakistan too has several genuine reasons to be angry. In trying to keep Beijing happy, Islamabad has made several compromises ranging from overlooking the humongous averse environmental impact of CPEC projects to extending extraordinary concessions to Chinese working on CPEC projects and even disregarding the genuine concerns of locals. This has accentuated political and social upheaval as well as contributed to the country's burgeoning financial crisis and Islamabad is miffed that Beijing has not adequately appreciated Pakistan's actions. This is evident from Pakistan Foreign Office [FO] spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch's remark that *"The statement from the Chinese ambassador is perplexing, especially considering the **positive diplomatic traditions between Pakistan and China.**"* [Emphasis added].

In an attempt to appease Beijing, Islamabad has indeed yielded a lot. For example, on China's bidding, the Pakistan army took the highhanded decision of not only converting the entire port city of Gwadar into a virtual fortress but also treating locals as potential terrorists and subjecting them and their houses to repeated searches. It has also institutionalised forcible abductions and enforced disappearances in the garb of security necessity and thereby further alienated the beleaguered Baloch people.

The irony is that while Chinese trawlers are allowed to fish in Gwadar's waters, the Pakistan navy restricts local fishermen from accessing their traditional fishing areas for security reasons. While Rawalpindi may deny it, but the fact that all major mass movements against human rights excesses, enforced disappearances, extra judicial killings and denial of basic rights in Balochistan like the *Baloch Yakjethi Committee* [Balochistan Unity Committee] or BYC and *Haq Do Tehreek Gwadar* [give Gwadar its rights] started after CPEC activities commenced in Balochistan surely can't be a mere coincidence.

Both the *Haq Do Tehreek* leader Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman Baloch and BYC chief Dr [Ms] Mahrang Baloch squarely blame Beijing for aggravating the already sorry state of affairs prevailing in Balochistan. The former has reportedly issued a warning to Chinese nationals in Gwadar that if Islamabad *"ignores"* their peaceful protests, the Baloch people would be well within their rights *"to pick up and use weapons to protect our rights."*

Similarly the BYC leader is sanguine that *"China or any other country investing in Balochistan is directly involved in the Baloch genocide. The enforced disappearances and forced displacements in the Makran coastal belt are huge. They are looting our resources with no gain to local Baloch."* Her observation is based on the harsh reality and a true reflection of Baloch sentiments that is fuelling armed resistance by nationalist groups.

With Beijing becoming publicly more assertive this *"iron brother"* of Pakistan is fast turning into a *"big brother"* and Pakistan is probably realising that in today's world, there are no free lunches. As the metaphoric Sino-Pakistan friendship extravaganza shows signs of crumbling, Islamabad does deserve sympathy for having walked into Beijing's *'friendship trap'*.

However, Islamabad cannot absolve itself for taking China's friendship for granted-it surely couldn't be unaware of Greek philosopher Plato's [427-348 BC] warning to mankind given many-many centuries ago that *"True friendship can exist only between equals."*

## Depsang to Kazan: Emerging détente between China and India

04 November 2024, [ORF](#), Atul Kumar and Antara Ghosal Singh

*Although India and China have reached a preliminary agreement to disengage, the future development path of China-India relations is still full of potholes and slippery slopes*

The fact that an agreement between China and India to move forward on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) was in the works has been anticipated in both capitals. Since late 2022, both governments have pursued a modus vivendi for disengagement at Depsang and Demchok, with the issue discussed threadbare in the Corps Commanders' meetings. The 17<sup>th</sup> Corps Commanders' meeting on 20 December 2022 marked a critical point. Following the establishment of five buffer zones in Eastern Ladakh and the Yangtse clash on 9 December 2022, the meeting provided an in-depth dialogue on the disengagement frameworks and probable solutions. In the next two years, these frameworks were substantially refined by both militaries which received the political endorsement this year.

This agreement has initiated the disengagement process at both remaining locations. As discussed below, a review of the lead-up to the Kazan agreement, its specifics on the ground and perspectives on this agreement from China, indicates that within strategic and political constraints, the agreement is a constructive restart for both states, though tempered with cautious optimism.

### **The buffer zones and their complexities**

By September 2022, China and India had established five buffer zones at Pangong Tso Lake from Fingers 4-8, Gogra, Hot Springs, Kugrang Nullah and the Galwan Valley. This belt of buffer zones was aimed to separate both forces from their face-to-face deployments and was located mostly on the Indian side of the LAC, creating a distance of 3–10 kilometres between both sides and establishing restrictions on human patrolling or grazing temporarily. Only electronic surveillance was allowed. The denial of grazing received substantial criticism in India as these areas were traditional grazing grounds for the local population. However, the Indian government argued that if they could not patrol or graze in these buffer zones, neither could the Chinese and that ensured stability and peace in these areas.

*This belt of buffer zones was aimed to separate both forces from their face-to-face deployments and was located mostly on the Indian side of the LAC, creating a distance of 3–10 kilometres between both sides and establishing restrictions on human patrolling or grazing temporarily.*

The negotiation for achieving a similar modus vivendi in Depsang and Demchok proved difficult. The standoff in these two places was a legacy issue, starting in 2008-09 and eventually becoming a part of the 2020 Galwan Clash discourse. After surveying this area in September 2013, the Shyam Saran Committee reported that the Chinese were not allowing the Indian Army patrol units to access patrolling points 10 to 13 in the Depsang bulge area and creating difficulties for patrols in the Sirijap and Demchok area. Therefore, these two locations proved to be the toughest to negotiate.

Nevertheless, the Indian establishment displayed adept negotiation skills, finally securing the Kazan Agreement. This accord avoids creating buffer zones in the area, allowing staggered patrolling by small patrol units from both sides. Indian troops can finally access patrolling points 10 to 13 in this region again.

### **Economic foundation for the political agreement**

Since the 2020 clashes, China-India relations have stagnated, marked by minimal engagement across trade, economics and regional political fronts. India, stepping away from its oft-professed neutral politics, has actively engaged in the Malabar Exercises and the QUAD, aligned closely with the United States (US), while restricting Chinese investments, apps, and airlines. India has often adopted positions countering China. Beijing believes India has become detrimental to its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Southern Asia and withheld support from multiple Chinese economic initiatives namely, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and the China-Nepal India Corridor.

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China-India trade, however, has remained strong. Consequently, India's trade deficit has grown over the last three years, often crossing US\$ 100 billion a year. In addition, foreign direct investment (FDI) in India has dropped substantially, to less than US\$30 billion in the last financial year. The Indian Finance Ministry has, therefore, expressed concerns, prompting the Indian Chief Economic Advisor, Anantha Nageswaran, to advocate for renewed engagement with China in the 2024 Economic Survey. China, meanwhile, is in difficult terrain as its industrial overcapacity, high unemployment rate and collapsing real estate sector, along with severe societal repression by a paranoid Chinese state, has created a volatile economic environment. The Kazan Agreement is, thus, viewed as a mutually beneficial pact to reduce hostilities and



reestablish a working arrangement to minimise the potential for bilateral conflict.

### **Opinions in China on the agreement**

The border agreement with India has received intense attention within China's strategic community. The big question everyone tends to ask "Now that India's Modi has given a thumbs up, will China and India turn the page in terms of bilateral ties." In the Chinese assessment, this is a substantial achievement, a hard-won success. It is being argued that this ice-breaker will revitalize China-India relations and can potentially open up new space for cooperation between the two countries on the global stage. For example, some Chinese scholars believe the Kazan meeting will pave the way for greater cooperation between China and India on the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) platform. There are talks about PM Modi personally attending the summit in China next year and opening up a new chapter in bilateral cooperation.

As per Lin Minwang, a researcher at the Centre for South Asian Studies, Fudan University, the current positive turn in China-India relations shows that India's diplomatic strategy is gradually returning to its "multi-alliance" core position under the Modi government. Similarly, Zhang Jiadong, another India watcher associated with Fudan University argued that "both sides realize that their primary focus is still economic development and responding to changes in the international landscape. In that case, a costly border dispute is not in the interests of both countries."

*The warming of Sino-Indian relations will make the US and the West uneasy and may impact their strategic layout and global and regional policies.*

The Chinese side further notes how the handshake across the Himalayas can be an important turning point in global geopolitics and have a far-reaching international political significance. The warming of Sino-Indian relations will make the US and the West uneasy and may impact their strategic layout and global and regional policies. It is, therefore, no coincidence, they argue, that the US has been building pressure upon India on the Khalistan issue and has threatened to adopt severe measures if India does not cooperate. Simultaneously, other Western powers continue to court India and lure it into the "trap of replacing China". For example, Chinese scholars note with concern how German Chancellor Scholz recently led a delegation to India, promising the strengthening of German-Indian economic cooperation while publicly promoting a "de-risking from China" strategy and projecting India as an alternative to China.

However, while appreciating the development, Chinese scholars advise caution given the structural differences in China-India ties. There seems to be a consensus within the Chinese strategic community that "the border agreement signed by China and India does not mean that all issues have been resolved. The

agreement's implementation, the progress of subsequent negotiations, and whether the two sides can trust each other are all important factors in the future of China-India relations." The signing of the agreement is only "a starting point".

Chinese scholars argue that true reconciliation with India will require greater patience and sincerity, as the border issue is complex, involves sovereignty issues, and is subject to interference from third parties or external forces. Liu Zongyi, director of the South Asia Research Center at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS), argued that although there have been some positive developments in bilateral ties, it will still take some time for the relationship to recover. Since India's great power ambitions and its overall strategic goals of outcompeting China have not changed much, China needs to exercise caution, particularly Chinese companies still need to adopt a cautious attitude when investing in India."

### **Final evaluation**

The general feeling in China is that although both states have reached a preliminary agreement to disengage, the future development path of China-India relations is still full of potholes and slippery slopes. The two sides still face the possibility of a sudden escalation in conflicts and differences because the borderline has not yet been fully determined.

*China will keep a keen eye on how India can maintain good relations with China while maintaining cooperation with the United States in the future.*

In addition, the future direction of the China-US-India trilateral relationship is full of uncertainty. The US elections, scheduled for November 2024, will also impact China-India relations. China will keep a keen eye on how India can maintain good relations with China while maintaining cooperation with the United States in the future.

Similarly in India, the disengagement at Depsang and Demchok is ongoing, and the patrolling may begin around Diwali. However, hereafter both sides must negotiate de-escalation and de-induction and future access and patrolling in existing buffer zones. The completion of this process will bring back a modicum of sensitivity towards each other's red lines and may generate mutual respect. The Kazan Agreement, in sum, has reduced the animosity and mistrust and opened the scope for bilateral cooperation. The trust between both Indian and Chinese militaries, however, is a long way ahead.

## EXPLAINED: How do Asia's authoritarian states pick leaders?

04 November 2024, [RFA](#), Paul Eckert

### Communist-style staged elections and hereditary strongmen dominate.



Clockwise from top left, China's President Xi Jinping, North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un, Laos Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone and Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary To Lam. (AFP photos)

In a world bracing for a close U.S. presidential election result this week, a large swathe of Asia picks its leaders without suspense -- and mostly with little popular participation.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping was confirmed by the National People's Congress in March 2013 with 2,952 votes for, one against, and three abstentions. Last year the rubber stamp parliament voted unanimously to give him a third term, putting him on track to stay in power for life.

North Korea's leaders have inherited their power from father to son for three generations. They are technically "elected" -- but there is no choice. In 2014, Kim Jong Un was elected to the Supreme People's Assembly without a dissenting vote with 100% turnout.

A leadership succession that played out in Vietnam this year saw a serial purge of political rivals and the death of an ailing top leader propel To Lam, a wily career security policeman to the top of the Communist Party, where he is maneuvering for a key intra-party vote in early 2026.

In U.S. elections, the president and vice president are not elected directly in a popular vote by citizens. Instead, they are chosen through the Electoral College process, in which electors equal to the total number of representatives and senators a state has in Congress cast that state's votes. These electors vote according to the majority of residents in that state.

Members of Congress -- 100 in the Senate and 435 in the House of the Representatives -- are elected directly by residents of each of the 50 states.

### How do the Communist-ruled countries in Asia choose their leaders?

Of the six countries covered by Radio Free Asia, whose mission is to provide independent media to territories that lack it, four -- China, North Korea, Laos and

Vietnam -- were founded and organized on the Marxist-Leninist party-state model copied from the Soviet Union.

Some countries call themselves "democratic," but in practice the people have little or no say in choosing their leaders or governments.

### NORTH KOREA

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was founded in 1948 by Kim Il Sung, who had been cultivated by Moscow as a Cold War ally in the northern half of Korea.

North Korea describes itself as an "independent socialist state" with universal and compulsory suffrage at 17, and holds elections for the Supreme People's Assembly, the national legislature every four-to-five years, and for local People's Assemblies every four years.

In practice, each candidate is pre-selected by the North Korean government and voters are allowed to vote either "yes" or "no" in ballots that are not private. Nearly all elections report 100% support for the government.

### CHINA

The People's Republic of China, founded in 1949 by Mao Zedong, describes itself as a "socialist democracy and a people's democratic dictatorship." Xi-era slogans describe it as "socialist consultative democracy" and "whole-process people's democracy."

China has universal suffrage from age 18, with voting at five levels of People's Congresses, from local townships to cities and provinces, to the parliamentary National People's Congress. Higher-level Congresses are indirectly elected by delegates of lower-level Congresses.

Technically not a one-party state, China has eight non-communist parties, including the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the China Democratic League, the China National Democratic Construction Association and the China Association for Promoting Democracy.

However, as the U.S.-based Freedom House notes, "the CCP effectively monopolizes all political activity and does not permit meaningful political competition." The noncommunist parties serve in an advisory role, "but their activities are tightly circumscribed, and they must accept the CCP's leadership as a condition for their existence."

### VIETNAM

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam, founded in 1975 after Ho Chi Minh's Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) overthrew the U.S.-backed Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), likewise followed the Soviet template of one-party politics.

Suffrage is universal at age 18, and direct elections are held for local People's Councils and the National Assembly -- but all candidates are pre-approved by the ruling party.

“Vietnam is a one-party state, dominated for decades by the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam,” says Freedom House. “Although some independent candidates are technically allowed to run in legislative elections, most are banned in practice.”

In the May 2021 elections for 500 National Assembly seats, the Communist Party of Vietnam took 97.2% of the vote, while non-party candidates got 2.8%. The next election is in early 2026.

#### **LAOS**

In the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, a Communist protégé of Vietnam also founded in 1975, “is a one-party state in which the ruling Lao People’s Revolutionary Party dominates all aspects of politics and harshly restricts civil liberties,” says Freedom House.

Laos has universal suffrage, and its president, vice president, and prime minister are elected by the National Assembly. These elections, however, have been deemed not free or fair, and in the most recent 2021 poll, the ruling party took 158 of the body’s 164 seats, with the rest going to pre-approved independents.

“The electoral laws and framework are designed to ensure that the LPRP, the only legal party, dominates every election and controls the political system,” says Freedom House.

#### **CAMBODIA**

Radio Free Asia’s other target countries are Cambodia and Myanmar, more pluralistic states that have held competitive, if flawed elections.

Cambodia has been holding elections since 1993, as mandated by the 1991 Paris Agreements, which ended the country’s civil war and mandated democratic elections under a parliamentary constitutional monarchy.



*Cambodia's former Prime Minister Hun Sen shows his inked finger after voting at a polling station during the Senate election in Takhmao city, Kandal province on Feb. 25, 2024. (Tang Chhin Sothy/AFP)*

In practice, however, Cambodia’s political system has been dominated by the Cambodian People’s Party and its leader Hun Sen. A strongman who violently refused to share power with coalition partners in the 1990s, Hun Sen ruled the country for more than three

decades until handing power last year to his son, Hun Manet, but still wields great influence.

“While the country conducted semi-competitive elections in the past, polls are now held in a severely repressive environment,” says Freedom House, noting Hun Sen’s penchant for banning popular opposition parties.

The July 2023 National Assembly elections, held just a month before Hun Manet took over from his father, were condemned by the United States, the European Union and the United Nations as neither free nor fair.

#### **MYANMAR**

In November 2020, the country formerly known as Burma emerged from only its third semi-competitive election since its independence in 1948, a vote that delivered a strong majority to the National League for Democracy, or NLD, of de facto national leader Aung San Suu Kyi.



*An official with the Myanmar Union Election Commission counts ballots at a polling station in Naypyidaw on Nov. 8, 2020. (Aung Shine Oo/AP)*

The multi-party election, which observers widely deemed credible despite flaws with conflict zone voting cancellations and registration, delivered 86 percent of the seats in the Assembly of the Union to Suu Kyi’s NLD, routing the army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party.

On Feb. 1, 2021, Myanmar’s military, citing baseless claims of election fraud, deposed State Counsellor Suu Kyi and President Win Myint in a coup d’etat, later jailing them.

The junta annulled the results of the 2020 vote, and pledged to hold elections in 2023 – but has repeatedly delayed this and extended its emergency rule as the nation became more deeply embroiled in a civil war that has killed thousands and destroyed wide swathes of the country.

The military regime has committed to holding a general election late next year, with voting to be staggered because of security concerns, but has continued to extend a state of emergency across the country and brought in tough new registration laws that disqualify many parties from standing.

#### **TIBET**

Chinese-run “autonomous” regions such as Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang largely follow mainland practices. But Tibetans who followed the Dalai Lama when the spiritual leader fled into exile in India and other countries around the world in 1959, and their descendants, have been choosing their leaders.

In 2021, Tibetans living outside of their China-ruled homeland held their third election since 2011, to seat a new political leader, or sikyong, for their India-based government-in-exile called the Central Tibetan Administration.

Penpa Tsering won the CTA’s leadership in a vote among the Tibetan diaspora, a community of about 150,000 people living in 40 countries, mainly India, Nepal, Europe and North America.

### **EXPLAINED: What is China’s United Front and how does it operate?**

03 November 2024, [RFA](#), Paul Eckert

#### **Praising it as a ‘magic weapon,’ Xi Jinping has expanded the murky influence operations.**

Evidence is mounting of clandestine Chinese influence operations in the heart of America.

Just in the last few months, a former aide to the governor of New York state and her husband were arrested for alleged illicit activities promoting the interests of China; a Chinese democracy activist was arrested and accused of spying for China; and a historian was convicted of being an agent for Beijing.

The three separate cases of former Albany functionary Linda Sun, dissident Yuanjun Tang and author Wang Shujun took place in New York alone. And they were not the first cases of alleged Chinese influence operations targeting immigrants from China in the Big Apple.

Those cases came to light as a detailed investigation by the *Washington Post* revealed that China’s diplomats and pro-Beijing diaspora were behind demonstrations in San Francisco that attacked opponents during President Xi Jinping’s visit to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, or APEC, summit last November.

All bear the hallmarks of China’s “united front” influence operations conducted by government ministries, party operatives and local proxies – but in a veiled manner.

“United front work is a unique blend of influence and interference activities, as well as intelligence operations that the CCP uses to shape its political environment,” said the House of Representatives Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party in a report published last November.

#### **What is the United Front Work Department?**

Coordinating this overseas influence and interference work is Beijing’s shadowy United Front Work

Department, or UFWD, set up in 1942, even before the Communists took over control of China.

Headed by Shi Taifeng, a Politburo member, it seeks to promote China’s political interests through an extensive network of organizations and individuals around the world, experts say.

It spares no effort trying to push Beijing’s view – and crush dissenting opinions – among people in Taiwan and Hong Kong, ethnic minorities such as Mongolians, Tibetans and Uyghurs as well as among religious groups.

#### **How does the UFWD operate?**

The United Front Work Department is engaged in a mixture of activities, from interfering in the Chinese diaspora and suppressing dissidents to gathering intelligence, encouraging investment in China and facilitating the transfer of technology, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, or ASPI, said in a report.

It uses quasi-official organizations and civil society groups based overseas to blur the line between official and private, giving China plausible deniability in many cases, witnesses told the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, which advises Congress on China.

It funds Confucius Institutes – Chinese-language study centers on university campuses around the world – many of which have been shut down in the United States. It also funds diplomats’ engagement with foreign elites and its police force’s perpetration of “transnational repression” – clamping down on dissidents or opponents outside China’s borders, the review commission said in a 2023 [report](#) based on expert testimony.

United front groups often have innocuous sounding names, like the Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Reunification or the Chinese People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries. Many appear to be ordinary overseas Chinese community organizations, and are found in business and even in multinational corporations.

Lurking behind or within them, though, are government or party agencies – very often China’s powerful intelligence, security and secret police agency.

“United front groups are used – very specifically – to hide the Ministry of State Security,” said Peter Mattis, head of the non-profit Jamestown Foundation. “This is why I like to think of the United Front Work Department as the tall grass that is sort of deliberately cultivated to hide snakes,” he told RFA.

#### **What is the history of China’s ‘united front’ work?**

Under the Moscow-led Comintern in the 1920s, the Chinese Communist Party adapted Soviet revolutionary Vladimir Lenin’s concept of forming a “united front” – forging temporary alliances with friends and lesser enemies in order to defeat greater enemies.



After Mao Zedong's Communists took power in 1949, united front work focused internally on co-opting Chinese capitalists and intellectuals, who were brought to heel and persecuted in the 1950s under Mao's vicious ideological campaigns.

Xi Zhongxun, the father of current President Xi Jinping, played a [key united front work role](#) with top Tibetan Buddhist figures, trying to influence the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

### **What role has Xi played?**

While China denies meddling in the affairs of foreign nations, experts say that under President Xi, China's overseas influence activities have become more aggressive and technologically sophisticated.

In 2017, Xi famously repeated Mao's description of united front work as a "magic weapon" for the party's success. But two years before that, he established a "leading small group" to coordinate top-level united front work and carried out a major expansion and reorganization of the UFWD.

"We will build a broad united front to forge great unity and solidarity, and we will encourage all the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation to dedicate themselves to realizing the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation," Xi told the 20th Party Congress in 2022. That congress saw Xi's top ideological theorist, Wang Huning, who ranks fourth in the Politburo, appointed to lead the national-level united front system, the House Select Committee report said.

Xi has built up the power and capacity of the UFWD, which controls 11 subordinate government agencies, including the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office, the State Ethnic Affairs Commission and the State Administration for Religious Affairs, according to Australia's ASPI.

### **What are some examples of the UFWD's efforts in the U.S.?**

In New York, prosecutors say that Linda Sun and her husband, Christopher Hu, received millions of dollars in cash, event tickets and gourmet salted duck from the UFWD. In exchange, Sun tried to remove references to Taiwan in state communications, and obtained unauthorized letters from the governor's office to help Chinese officials travel, prosecutors say. In California during Xi's visit in November, the *Washington Post* [reported](#), the Chinese Consulate in Los Angeles paid for supporters' hotels and meals and directly interacted with aggressive actors who punched and kicked anti-Xi protesters and attacked them with flagpoles and chemical spray. U.S. stopovers by Taiwan leaders have drawn similar protests.

### **Who are the targets of united front work?**

Sun and Hu represent a key demographic in the UFWD's crosshairs: the Chinese diaspora. The activist Tang had access to the overseas Chinese dissident and pro-democracy community and its network of supporters.

United front pressure and harassment tactics – including threats against family in China – are deployed against diaspora members of China's persecuted ethnic and religious minorities: Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians, and members of the banned Falun Gong movement.

Citizens of Taiwan have for decades been pressured by united front efforts to support unification with the Communist-controlled mainland.

The recent imposition of draconian national security legislation in Hong Kong has made citizens and exiles who oppose those authoritarian steps in formerly free Chinese territory targets of united front pressure.

These targets are not alone and the list is growing, with [Australia](#), [Britain](#), [Canada](#) and [New Zealand](#) also grappling with Chinese influence campaigns that smack of united front work.

"There's no clear distinction between domestic and overseas united front work: all bureaus of the UFWD and all areas of united front work involve overseas activities," the report from Australia's [ASPI](#) said.

"This is because the key distinction underlying the United Front is not between domestic and overseas groups, but between the CCP and everyone else," it said.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington told Radio Free Asia that the United Front's domestic role is to "promote cooperation between the (Communist Party) and people who are not members of it." Outreach to the diaspora "helps give full play to their role as a bridge linking China with the rest of the world," the embassy spokesperson's office said in an e-mailed statement.

"Its work is transparent, above-board and beyond reproach," it said. "By making an issue out of China's United Front work, some people are trying to discredit China's political system and disrupt normal exchange and cooperation between China and the United States."

### **Why Xi Jinping dreads the Dalai Lama**

03 November 2024, [The Sunday Guardian](#), Vijay Kranti

*Xi and the CCP are obsessed with the Dalai Lama, which is outrageous because of their declared contempt for religion and their denigration of the Dalai Lama.*

On 21 October 2024, Penpa Tsering, the elected "President" of Tibet made experts from a leading New Delhi think-tank laugh aloud when he advised Chinese President Xi Jinping to order his Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to find out reincarnations of the great dead Chinese leaders like Chairman Mao and Deng Xiaoping. He made this tongue in cheek remark as he was underlining President Xi's feverish obsession with



exclusive ownership of the process of discovering the next child reincarnation of the present Dalai Lama.

This obsession of Comrade Xi and his Communist Party looks funny, or is rather outrageous because of its declared contempt for religion and also that all Chinese leaders, right from Mao to Xi himself, have been using the choicest abusive terms in the Communist lexicon for the Dalai Lama. The six-century-old institution of the Dalai Lama of Tibet is unique because it occupies the supreme position in both spiritual as well as temporal matters of Tibet, and this inheritance transfers only through reincarnation. It is believed that enlightened souls like the Dalai Lamas and other learned monks have the virtue of guiding their own rebirth process. After the death of a Dalai Lama, the Tibetans search for, identify and install the next Dalai Lama baby boy through a typical process, which involves testing of all boy children born after the death of a Dalai Lama. A major factor which directs this search process are the personal indications and desires left behind by a Dalai Lama about the place, family and other elements of his own choice of his next birth.

In Tibet, China has been facing strong resistance from the Tibetan population right from the day when the Chinese PLA marched into Lhasa in 1951. In the initial four decades of Tibetan occupation, the communist masters of Tibet tried every tool under their command to suppress religion with the hope that absence of religion will make people understand and accept communism more faithfully. But it only provoked the Tibetan masses further to express their anger through small but frequent uprisings across Tibet. Massive uprising of Lhasa in 1987 and 1989 forced the Beijing leadership to realize the influence of religion and of Dalai Lama despite his three-decade long absence. It was decided to use religion as a tool rather than resisting it.

The first public signal of this change in Chinese strategy came in 1992 when Beijing decided to undertake and install the reincarnation of 16th Karma Pa. Same process was repeated in 1995 for identification of the incarnation of 10th Panchen Lama whom Beijing had used against the Dalai Lama till he died in Tibet at Shigatse in 1989. A committee of senior monks of late Panchen Lama's monastery was formed under the leadership of a communist officer to look out for the new incarnation of late Panchen Lama. The monk members of the committee identified a five-year-old boy, Gedhun Choeky Nyima and secretly took approval of the exiled Dalai Lama on the authenticity of the new incarnate boy. This angered Beijing so much that Gedhun and his parents were taken away by Chinese security personnel and another boy of the same age, named Gyaltsen Norbu, was formally installed as the new Panchen Lama. The whereabouts of Gedhun and

his family are yet to be made public by the Chinese authorities despite repeated international outcries.

The Panchen Lama's role is important because the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama play an important role in certifying the incarnation of each other and also work alternately as the teacher of the other's incarnation. Beijing has placed high stakes on Gyaltsen with the hope that he will be a useful tool when it comes to installing the next Dalai Lama. But the Tibetans have refused to accept. So much so that the Chinese administration uses police force and money to bring Tibetan crowds to his congregations.

In 2007, the Chinese government adopted a special law called "Order-5" which governs the search process and certification of the reincarnation of the future "Living Buddhas" (or "Tulku" in Tibetan terminology). This law gives all powers for the selection of any future "Living Buddhas" to the respective Buddhist association of the respective region and is fully controlled by senior communist cadres.

Beijing has come to realize that it will be easy to tame the Tibetan people once the Dalai Lama is under its control. But as a permanent solution to its Tibetan headache the Xi government is now fully focused at establishing its exclusive claim over the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama. To pre-empt such Chinese efforts, the Dalai Lama issued a detailed official statement on 24 Sep 2011 which reads, "...the person who reincarnates has sole legitimate authority over where and how he or she takes rebirth and how that reincarnation is to be recognized. It is a reality that no one else can force the person concerned, or manipulate him or her..." adding further that, "it is particularly inappropriate for Chinese communists, who explicitly reject even the idea of past and future lives, let alone the concept of reincarnate Tulkus, to meddle in the system of reincarnation and especially the reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas."

Being aware of Chinese plans about his reincarnation, the Dalai Lama had already played his master stroke by bifurcating the role and power of Dalai Lama by passing on all political powers, so far vested in the Dalai Lama, to the elected representatives of Tibet who comprise of the elected "Sikyong", the exile Parliament and the Tibetan judiciary. In practical terms it means that even if China manages to install a puppet Dalai Lama of its choice in Tibet, the real political powers will remain outside the control of Beijing or the CCP. This master stroke of the Dalai Lama has extended the shelf life of the political role of the Dalai Lama institution beyond his own life time and insulated the Tibetan system from Chinese manipulations.

## Ladakh disengagement is good, but what about Eastern Himalayas?

02 November 2024, [The Sentinel Assam](#), Amitava Mukherjee

*There is now an atmosphere of excitement in the corridors of power in New Delhi. Military disengagement with China in eastern Ladakh has taken place.*

There is now an atmosphere of excitement in the corridors of power in New Delhi. Military disengagement with China in eastern Ladakh has taken place. Armies of China and India have reportedly pulled back in Depsung and Demchok. This is good. But there is still a veil of silence over the 'Finger' points in the Pangong Tso lake area. Previously, India used to patrol till Finger 8. After the Chinese incursion, this came down up to Finger 4. What will happen here? Would India have to cede the area between the two abovementioned fingers? Till now, no clear cut official standpoint is available.

So, causes of worry remain. At the same time, there are glimmers of hope also. Xu Feihong, Chinese envoy to New Delhi, has expressed that relations between China and India are now standing at a new starting point with new development opportunities.

Is it really so? In 1962 also Chou en Lai, the then Chinese Premiere, had said many such pious words before his army swooped down on North Eastern India and reached up to Bomdilla, situated deep in Arunachal Pradesh and right up to the borders of Assam.

New Delhi must always keep in mind that in Chinese geopolitical interests, Arunachal Pradesh is much more important to them than the Ladakh sector, where, in many stretches, "not even a blade of grass grows." By a blitzkrieg in this sector, they can overrun Daulat Beg Oldi, India's last military post, on the foot of the Karakoram pass and cut off the Siachin glacier. But how much can China gain by doing this? The DBO outpost can hardly threaten the China controlled Aksai Chin, which is five miles to the east. On the other hand, China is already in Pakistan through the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) coming through Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

So, strategically, the importance of the western Himalayas is much less to China than it is in regard to the eastern Himalayas. Why is it so? The principal reason is China's burgeoning water shortage and, at the same time, increasing demands for electricity. To overcome it, Beijing is building up hydroelectric dams on the Brahmaputra in Tibet, thereby blocking the free flow of river water to India.

Now, the river valleys of Arunachal Pradesh have immense hydropower potential, currently estimated at 50,328 megawatts, or approximately 22 percent of

India's power generating capacity. Control over this state would give China immense strategic security.

Interestingly, we have not heard anything from China in recent times for settling border problems in the eastern Himalayas, particularly in the McMahon Line sector that involves Arunachal Pradesh. On the contrary, it's renamed' 30 places in this Indian state this year. On several occasions, China has included Arunachal Pradesh in its map.

With a certain motive, China is increasing its military capacity in the deep areas across Arunachal Pradesh. It is now well known that four sectors of the state, namely Asaphila, Tuting Axis, Chang Tze, and Fishtail 2, are under some kinds of Chinese threat.

There is no scope for oversatisfaction on the part of New Delhi over Beijing's future moves vis-à-vis Arunachal Pradesh. It is because the Tawang monastery of the state is invaluable to China for control over Tibetan Buddhism, which in turn means complete control over Tibet, an area now occupying the central position in China's foreign policy.

What would be New Delhi's approach now? Confabulations over the proper alignment of the McMahon Line are welcome. But at the same time, New Delhi should always be prepared for some surprises.

## Opinion: Don't get 'river-crabbed!' How China is cracking down on punny dissent

02 November 2024, [NPR](#), Scott Simon

An online blogger in China recently asked: how do you clean a flask? But the Mandarin word for flask is xi-jing-ping, which sounds like the name of China's leader, Xi Jin Ping. Government censors suspected the writer was really asking, "How do you get rid the president of China?" They took down the query.

If someone online in China refers to President Xi as a "paratrooper," they may not be hailing him as rugged and resourceful. Paratrooper in Mandarin is san bing, which sounds much like the word for "idiot."

China's Cyberspace Administration and Ministry of Education has begun what they call the Clear and Bright Campaign to prune the web in China of what they consider "irregular and uncivilized language."

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The language bureaucrats aren't just watching for criticism of President Xi, mentions of the Tiananmen Square massacre, or demonstrations in Hong Kong. They want to extinguish the seemingly innocuous phrases many Chinese have ingenuously appropriated to express dissent.

Wen'guang Huang, the Chinese writer, translator, and author of the honored memoir, *The Little Red Guard*, who now lives in Chicago, gave us several examples.

Xiang jiao pi, which is banana peel in Mandarin, has the same acronym as the name of President Xi. The word for shrimp moss is xia tai, similar to the Mandarin phrase for "step down." When someone on the Chinese web dares to declare, "Banana peel shrimp moss!" it is heard as a call for President Xi to step down.

When a Chinese censor finds an "irregular" phrase, they eliminate it, but call it "harmonizing". He-xie, the Mandarin word for harmony, sounds like the word for river crab, and so people who have been censored report they have been "river-crabbed."

Then there's Cao Ni Ma, the Mandarin name for the mythical grass mud horse. It sounds similar to a phrase that is so profane, I can't even hint at it. The Mandarin phrase for "cover your middle parts", dang zhong yang, sounds close to the name of the Chinese Party Central Committee. And so the artist Ai Weiwei created a music video in which voices sing out, "Grass mud horse and cover your middle part!" in "Gangnam Style," and, "Grass mud horse and river crab!"

Wen'guang Huang says the video can't be seen in China, of course. But people there have heard about it, and might hum it in hushed tones. The tune is catchy and appealing — like free speech.